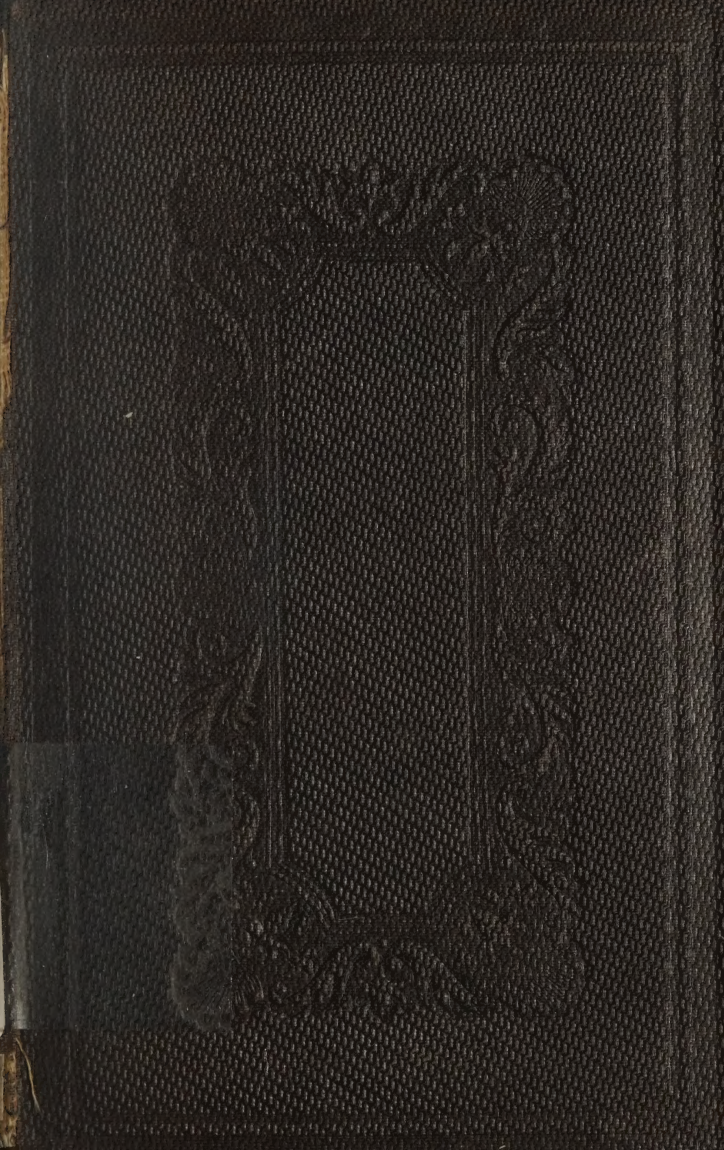




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WAS A PRISONER

OF THE AMERICAN ARMY

PAPAL ERRORS;

THEIR RISE AND PROGRESS.

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”—ISA. viii. 20.

LONDON:

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PAPAL ERRORS;

THEIR RISE AND PROGRESS.

INTRODUCTION.

DURING the last three months of the year 1850, the people of England in general have perhaps heard and said more about the Pope and Popery than during the whole previous course of their lives.—The attention of many has been drawn to a subject on which they had before scarcely bestowed a thought.

That “England, in common with other nations of Europe, was formerly under the dominion of the Pope, or bishop of Rome—that, about three hundred years ago, a great change took place, called the Reformation—that those who left the church of Rome were called Protestants—that the early promoters of this change endured much persecution, and that many of them were cruelly put to death for their religion—but that, after several struggles, England was quietly settled in the possession of religious liberty—and that most of the people embraced Protestantism in one or other of its forms;”—this is the full extent of knowledge possessed by many thousands of the British people,

on the subject of Popery and Protestantism. Many take it as a matter of course that, living in Protestant England, they are themselves Protestants, though altogether careless about religion; and many more, though really concerned about religion themselves, and desirous of extending it to others, have never been led to ask what Popery is. They have thought of Popery—if they have thought at all—as a thing of by-gone days—the concern of a former age, but not in any way capable of affecting them or their children.

In some places, during the last few years, curiosity has been awakened by the erection of buildings for Roman Catholic worship, or by the visible establishment of Roman Catholic societies. Perhaps some degree of alarm has been excited by the fact of such societies having been joined by persons from other religious bodies. But the feeling has not been very deep or very general.

Of late, however, circumstances have transpired to convince us that, whether or not we are in earnest in our Protestantism, the Pope is in earnest in his Popery. Well aware that his predecessors long held sway over the people of England, and believing, with too much reason, that some persons in the present day are half inclined to take upon them the yoke of bondage which their forefathers had shaken off, the Pope has ventured upon a bold stroke. Assuming the right, if he could but obtain the power, to exercise over us the authority which Rome formerly possessed, he has mapped out our country, and appointed to every part of it religious instructors of his own choosing, authorizing and commanding them to teach and govern all the

people of England according to the rules and orders of the Church of Rome.

The announcement of this vigorous measure, and the pompous and triumphant manner in which it has been proclaimed, have come upon the nation like a thunder-clap, or like the assault of midnight robbers. People are roused from their quiet slumbers, and starting to consciousness, are inquiring concerning this step of the Pope, whether it is, or, according to their several views, asserting that it is, or is not, a matter of real consequence—an insult to our queen—an infringement of the laws of our country—an interference with established institutions—an attack on our civil and religious liberties.

Not a few are now led to ask—What is Popery? Is it old or new—true or false—good or bad? Is it a matter that concerns only those who profess it as their chosen religion? or have we any duty to discharge, any interest to pursue, in promoting or resisting its spread among us? These, and many such, are the questions of persons who really wish for information, yet who have not the means or the inclination to study laboured controversy, nor to make themselves familiar with the voluminous details of history. For such persons this little volume is designed. In preparing it, may the writer be enabled to speak the truth in love; and may it be rendered useful to the reader as the means of assisting him to form his own judgment, and inducing him to cleave more closely than ever to that blessed book which “has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its subject!”

CHAPTER I.

RELIGION—REVELATION—IDOLATRY, HEATHEN AND JEWISH—STATE OF THE WORLD AT THE TIME OF CHRIST'S ADVENT.

RELIGION is that which binds man to God. It is a fixed and ruling principle of conscious dependence and willing obedience. Such was the religion of man in his original state. Our first parents in Paradise held happy intercourse with their Maker, receiving his bounties and obeying his commands. But man fell by transgression, and then the scene was changed. The holy, happy band which held man and woman to God was broken, and immediately the culprits began to dread and shun the Presence in which they had before delighted. They "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God," Gen. iii. 8. Nor would they or any of their descendants have ever done otherwise, had not God himself been pleased to invite them back, by intimations of mercy to the guilty race. Without a revelation of mercy inspiring hope of forgiveness, sinful man would be hardened in despair. Unable to shake off the consciousness that there is a God, whom he has offended, and who has power to punish him; the sinner would think only of escaping as far as possible from this Being, whom

he dreads. But sovereign mercy has interposed to draw back the wretched ruined wanderer—a wondrous way—not of man's invention, but of God's own devising and revealing, is provided for the return of sinful man to the favour and friendship of God. Man comes by faith in what God has revealed, and is again bound to God in dependence and obedience. This is religion, the same in substance in all ages, and under all dispensations. But it should never be lost sight of, that faith *must* have some declaration of God on which to rest—obedience *must* have some command of God to which it is yielded, and by which it is regulated, otherwise what men believe and what they do is not religion—it does not bind the soul to God.

Since the safety and well-being of man in time and eternity depend on his being brought back to God in the way of his appointment, it becomes a question of immense interest and importance—What has God declared and commanded? How can we *know* the will of God? The will of God has been revealed to man at different times and in various manners. But all communications coming from a perfect and unchangeable Being must agree with each other. The God of truth cannot contradict himself. What he has once spoken must be always true. Truth may be more or less clearly communicated to man; but every subsequent and advancing degree of information imparted will be in perfect harmony with every previous intimation. This should be constantly borne in mind, as a guard against being misled by any communication

purporting to be a declaration or a command from God, which is not really so.

Divine revelation teaches man the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. The first intimation of mercy issued from the lips of God himself, and contained in fact an epitome of the gospel: * by this the first transgressors were encouraged to hope, and were led, if at all, to true repentance; for there never has been any other way of salvation than by faith in Christ alone. How far they understood the nature of the promised interposition we do not know; but we do know that by faith in what God had promised, Abel, Enoch, Noah, and other holy patriarchs, offered sacrifices to God, and walked with God, and were accepted and approved.†

“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”‡ Four thousand years intervened between the first promise in Eden and its actual accomplishment on Calvary. During that long period the expectation of mankind was kept alive by clearer and clearer intimations of the coming Messiah. Prophets were from time to time raised up, to whom the Most High communicated his designs, commanding them to proclaim these things to the people, and to preserve permanent records for public use. By immediate revelation from God a sacred ritual was established, a holy place was chosen, priests were appointed, sacrifices were daily offered. Why was all this? Did the merciful Creator take pleasure in the blood-shedding of

* Gen. iii. 15.
xi. 4—7.

† Gen. iv. 4; v. 24; vi. 8, 9; Heb.
‡ Rev. xix. 10.

his creatures? or could the blood of lambs, and bulls, and goats, take away the sin of man? No: sacrifices were instituted to impress men with a sense of the deserts of sin—to teach them that “without shedding of blood is no remission;” * and to set before them, as in a figure, the true atoning sacrifice which God himself would provide.

When Jesus of Nazareth appeared, his harbinger pointed to him, and said to the people, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” † In his own teaching, Jesus could appeal to the Scriptures, with which the people, even the common people, among whom he dwelt, were familiar, and show them the fulfilment of all things which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Psalms, and in the Prophets, concerning himself. ‡ When he died on Calvary sacrifices had accomplished their end, and virtually ceased. There remained thenceforth no other sacrifice that could be acceptable to God or available to man.

The long course of time in which the Divine counsels were advancing to their accomplishment, fully manifested also the depravity, the blindness, and the helplessness, of fallen man. The first glimmering of mercy might have guided man in his return to God; and did so, when believingly and obediently followed. But in many instances it was not followed. Fallen man has always been more ready to devise a way for himself, than to fall in with the methods of sovereign

* Heb. ix. 22.

† John i. 29.

‡ John v. 39; Luke xxiv. 44.

mercy. The first-born of the human race is a melancholy example of the tendency of corrupt human nature to go further and further from God, to reject the overtures and invitations of mercy, and to persist in hardened rebellion. Under the influence of sin, men do not like to retain the knowledge of God. They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. The more they delight in wickedness the more they shut their eyes to the light of the knowledge of God. Much of the darkness of the world is wilful.

Parental instruction has always been a powerful instrument for good or evil. The pious patriarchs, who loved and followed the light of truth, would endeavour to induce their children to take it as their guide. But the wicked head of a family would bring up his children in disregard of God ; and the lessons of pride, self-indulgence, and vice, given by that wicked parent, harmonizing too well with the corrupt native bias, succeeding generations would advance to greater and still greater degrees of wickedness ; and the carnal mind would more and more manifest not only forgetfulness and disregard of God, but enmity against him. Thus it was that the wickedness of the old world reached such a height as brought upon it utter ruin and desolation.

By the general deluge the human race was again reduced to one family. But even in that one signally favoured family the knowledge and fear of God were not long retained. Within the life-time of those who were preserved in the ark bold designs of haughty defiance against God were

systematically attempted, and baffled only by Divine interference.* And in about four hundred years mankind, with few exceptions, were sunk in the darkness of idolatry. They worshipped false gods ! The heavenly bodies, so bright, and beautiful, and useful, were justly admired ; but the wise and benevolent Creator was forgotten, and the worship due to him alone was transferred to the work of his hands.

Error is a steep descent. The first step taken, the progress is fearfully rapid. There is no depth of absurdity or cruelty to which it may not reach ; nor can any bounds be assigned to its corrupting influence. The impious idea having once been admitted, that worship may be given to any creature, however exalted, superstitious and idolatrous imaginations became more and more debased and grovelling.

Men who had been famous in their life-time were deified and worshipped after their death. Earth and rivers, beasts, birds, fishes, and reptiles, in turn received the senseless homage of man. Then images of silver and gold, wood and stone, wrought into form by the hands of men, men fell down and worshipped as the representatives of some unseen being.

Partly from the innate consciousness of a rational creature, and partly from some traditionary remains of truth, man has always had some notion of a Creator—a Power above, who bestows good, or inflicts evil ; and who may be pleased or displeased with the conduct of mortals. The idea of

* Gen. xi.

sacrifices, too, has generally, if not universally, prevailed. But without the continuous light of revelation, man's traditionary knowledge of God would become more and more confused and corrupt. Not only would he worship and serve the creature instead of the Creator, but his notions of One unseen Being would be "altogether such as himself." Hence the false gods of the heathen were represented as the patterns and patrons of vice, and their false worship was a compound of obscenity and cruelty.

The same description suited the Gentile world of old as suits the heathen nations of the present day. "When nothing lies heavy on the conscience, they trust to idle ceremonies, and amuse themselves with riotous festivals, which they call religious. When fear about a future state is excited, they will torture their own bodies, and violate the innocent feelings of nature ; while interested priests make a gain of their superstitious imaginations, and buoy them up with the most ridiculous hopes, or plunge them into the most slavish fears.* "Darkness has covered the earth ; and gross darkness the people ;" and "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."†

Among the ancient heathens there arose a few thinking men who despised these superstitions. They called themselves philosophers, or lovers of wisdom. They speculated and disputed, and asserted much about the nature and origin of things. But they did not agree with one another ; they did not satisfy themselves ; they did not enlighten

* Ryland.

† Isa. lx. 2 ; Psa. lxxiv. 20.

or reform the people: "The world by wisdom knew not God"—knew not "the way of peace."*

Yet more strange and deplorable than even the spectacle of a world lying in the darkness of heathenism, is the fact that the favoured people of Israel, on whom the light of revelation never ceased to shine, who possessed the lively oracles of God, and who, in their divinely-appointed ritual, daily saw the way of salvation evidently set forth before them, often forsook the true God and followed the abominable idolatries of the heathen. They brought upon themselves, as a nation, the heavy judgments of God. They were given up into the hands of their enemies. Their holy city and the temple were destroyed, and the people carried into captivity.

At length the remnant of Israel was restored to their own land. The temple was rebuilt, and those sacred rites resumed which significantly prefigured the promised Messiah. The truly pious among the Jews used these rites as they were designed. They looked through the type to the truth, and "waited for the consolation of Israel."† But too many rested in the mere outward observance, and prided themselves on the magnificence of their temple, the pomp and splendour of their ceremonial. They drew near to God with their mouth, and honoured him with their lips, but their hearts were far from him. Their religious teachers, the scribes and priests, were, for the most part, proud and worldly-minded, some grossly licentious, some bigoted and self-righteous; and more disposed to keep the

* 1 Cor. i. 21; Rom. iii. 17.

† Luke ii. 25, 38.

people in ignorance than to enlighten them. They laid great stress on minute circumstances, enforced many observances, and many restrictions not commanded by God. Thus they turned away the attention of the people from the weightier matters of the law—the ruling principle of love and obedience to God, producing justice, mercy, and faithfulness towards men. And thus, though they did not again expressly worship idols, they made the law of God of none effect through their traditions ; and in vain did they profess to worship him, while teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

Very dark and corrupt was the state of this fallen world, when “through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high” visited mankind, “to give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death ;” “to give knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins ;” “to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

* See Matt. xxiii. 23 ; Luke xi. 42 ; Matt. xv. 3, 8, 9.

† See Luke i. 77—79.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW TESTAMENT—THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST—PRE-
VAILING ERRORS AMONG THE JEWS.

THE collection of inspired writings which we call the Old Testament is that of which the people of Israel were made the depositaries, and which, to this day, they acknowledge and reverence, though the veil of unbelief and prejudice still hides from their eyes the true meaning of their own Scriptures. The New Testament, equally with the Old, is received by all Christians as a revelation from God. A great part of it consists of historical narrative. Mere facts might have been related by ordinary writers; and many of the facts of gospel history are referred to distinctly, though incidentally, by general historians, both Jewish and heathen—a circumstance which corroborates the New Testament narrative as a statement of facts. But it is not a mere record of facts—not merely a narrative of the life and death of a distinguished individual, or the history of a particular body of people. The New Testament identifies its chief Personage as the subject of ancient prophecy, pointing out a multitude of coincidences of time, place, parentage, character, and actions, such as

never did, and never can, meet in any other person. It directs the attention of mankind, in all ages, to Him as the only Saviour, prescribes the way of salvation by Him, and appoints the means for carrying on his designs of mercy to the very end of time. The Book that does this must possess both authority and infallibility—it must be written by inspiration from God.

The writers themselves were credible witnesses of the facts they relate ; but they needed Divine assistance, correction, and guidance, to preserve them from omitting through forgetfulness any thing that ought to be recorded, from recording any thing unnecessary, and from perpetuating any mistaken views of their own, instead of giving the simple truth of God. With this needed assistance and guidance* they were furnished, and hence they have transmitted to us a perfect book ; a book without redundancies—without deficiencies ; a book, on the truth of which whoever ventures his eternal all, will never be put to shame.

Jesus Christ came into this world of darkness and error as a teacher sent from God, to bear witness of the truth. Never before had the world been favoured with such a teacher—so wise—so gracious—so condescending. Never were instructions imparted of such immense interest and importance as his. He taught men the knowledge of God, of themselves, and of the way to eternal life. “No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father,

* John xiv. 26 ; xv. 26, 27 ; xvi. 13, 14.

he hath declared him." "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" "and this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."*

The excellency of the doctrines proved their Divine origin; and the life of the Teacher was a perfect transcript of his laws: "Never man spake like this man!" and "the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."† Vice and hypocrisy cowered under his pointed rebukes;‡ but the trembling penitent drew near and heard words of peace and pardon:§ the simple and ignorant could easily understand his plain instructions and familiar illustrations. The common people heard him gladly,|| and the little children thronged around him, crying, Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.¶

At the time of our Lord's ministry many errors prevailed among the Jews, which his teaching had a direct tendency to correct. Most of these errors resulted from perversions of the Holy Scriptures, and from the corrupt additions of men. It is necessary briefly to glance at them, for they are the errors of human nature, and many of them will be found among Romanists.

* John i. 18; iv. 24; iii. 16; xvii. 3.

† John vii. 46; Matt. vii. 28, 29. ‡ John viii. 9.

§ Luke vii. 48, 50.

|| Mark xii. 37.

¶ Matt. xxi. 9, 15, 16.

The scribes, most of them also Pharisees, were learned teachers of the law. They wrote copies of the Holy Scriptures; and they wrote also a multitude of traditionary precepts, which they enjoined on the observance of the people, as if they were of equal authority with the commandments of God. The scribes and Pharisees professed great strictness in religion, and so impressed the people with a notion of their peculiar sanctity, that it was a common saying among them, "If only two men were to enter heaven, one would be a Pharisee and the other a scribe." But Jesus taught men that, "except their righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, they should in no case enter the kingdom of heaven."* There was something very defective in the righteousness they inculcated. They made frivolous distinctions between great and small commandments; as if any thing that God had commanded could be trifling, or any act of disobedience could be other than sin. They represented that strictness in ceremonial observances would excuse moral delinquencies. They made a great scruple about trifles, and disregarded matters of real importance.† They made great outward show and pretence of holiness, and allowed and concealed inward pollution; even right things were done from a wrong motive, that they might be seen and applauded by men. They indulged and inculcated self-righteousness, as though they could do more than their duty, and as though their outward ceremonies and uncommanded austerities entitled them‡ to the favour of God.

* Matt. v. 20.

† Matt. xxiii. 24, 25, 28.

‡ Luke xviii. 12.

The traditions of the Jewish teachers were all on the side of corrupt human nature; and, while they professedly inculcated higher degrees of holiness, they were in reality ingenious devices for evading the commands of God. Thus, they encouraged angry, resentful feelings by adding to the Divine command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," the tradition, "and hate thine enemy."* They taught perjury and profanity by making distinctions without difference, and telling the people that they might swear by the temple or the altar, without binding themselves to truth and justice; but that if they swore by the gold in the temple treasury, or the gift on the altar, they were bound thereby.† The law of God commands to honour and succour parents. The scribes and Pharisees taught that a man might be excused from assisting his parents if he chose to say that all he could spare was consecrated as a gift.‡

Our Lord in his teaching exposed the folly and wickedness of these perversions. He explained the law of God to the people, and taught them that it requires inward holiness as well as outward conformity; that it may be broken by cherished thoughts and desires, as well as by outward transgressions, and that all sin springs from a corrupt heart;§ that in the sight of God all outward ceremonies are less regarded than a spirit of obedience, love, and mercy;|| that a humble penitent, however guilty, is more approved than a self-applauding Pharisee;¶ that the offering of genuine love,

* Matt. v. 43. † Matt. xxiii. 16—22. ‡ Matt. xv. 4—6.

§ Matt. v. 22, 28; Luke xvi. 15; Matt. xv. 18—20.

|| Matt. xii. 7, 12.

¶ Luke xviii. 9—14.

however small in itself, is valued far above ostentatious gifts, however costly ;* and that the most obedient and devoted of the human race has nothing wherein to glory, for he is but an unprofitable servant.†

One leading error of the Jews was that of priding themselves in their descent from Abraham, and fancying themselves secured by that relation, though they did not follow Abraham's example of faith and obedience. In this they were encouraged by their vain traditions, which told them that "Abraham sits next the gate of hell, and doth not permit any wicked Israelite to go down into it."‡ Hence they relied on individual security, irrespective of character ; and, as a nation, flattered themselves that, however wicked, they should never be given up of God. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, plainly told the Jews that these were empty boasts and vain expectations, which their expected Messiah, so far from confirming, would cut up by the roots ; and Jesus, in his discourses, parables, and prophecies, testified the same. He told the Jews that, while living in sin, they were the children and slaves of the devil ;§ that it was possible for a wicked Jew to be tormented in hell, and there remember and plead his relation to Abraham, but in vain ;|| and that, for their impenitence, obstinacy, and general rejection of him, speedy destruction would be brought on their city and their nation, which was fulfilled in the life-time of many who heard him.¶

* Mark xii. 41—44.

† Talmud.

|| Luke xvi. 22—31.

‡ Luke xvii. 10.

§ John viii. 33—59.

¶ Luke. xix. 41—44.

The Jews commonly expected that all the benefits resulting from the coming of the Messiah would be confined to them as the descendants of Abraham. But Jesus taught that many Gentiles would be admitted to share those privileges from which the Jews by unbelief excluded themselves.*

Many of the Jews, especially the Sadducees,† entertained false and unbelieving views of a future state. Some denied, many doubted, and more disregarded, not only the resurrection of the dead, but any future retribution. Jesus most expressly and forcibly taught the immortality of the soul,‡ the immediate happiness or misery of departed spirits,§ the resurrection of the body,|| the general judgment,¶ the eternal punishment of hell for all impenitent sinners,** and eternal blessedness in heaven for all the righteous.††

One false notion very prevalent among the Jews, was that of counting worldly prosperity as a proof of God's favour, and poverty and affliction, or sudden calamity, as indicating the subjects to be grievous sinners, under the curse of God. Hence they formed rash and unjust judgments of their fellow creatures.‡‡ But Jesus assured his hearers that such sufferers were not sinners, any more than themselves, and that without repentance they should perish;§§ and in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, he clearly taught that the

* Matt. viii. 11, 12. † Matt. xxii. 23; Acts xxiii. 8.

‡ Mark viii. 36; Luke xii. 4, 5. § Luke xvi. 22, 23; xxiii. 43. || John v. 28, 29; Matt. xxii. 23—32.

¶ Matt. xxv. 31, 32.

** Mark ix. 43—48.

†† Matt. xxv. 46.

‡‡ John ix. 1—3, 34.

§§ Luke xiii. 1—5.

poorest, most afflicted, and despised sufferer may be a beloved child of God, and an heir of heaven, while the most prosperous worldling is but travelling in state to hell.*

The pride of the Jewish teachers led them to regard the common people with contempt, as ignorant, despicable, unworthy of consideration, and incapable of thinking † for themselves.

The publicans, or collectors of taxes for the Roman governors, were utterly abhorred by the rulers and people generally. They were classed with "sinners," notorious, open sinners ; a character from which the self-righteous prided themselves on being perfectly free. These errors, for such they doubtless were, led many to entertain prejudices against the teaching of Jesus, both on account of his humble parentage, ‡ and also on account of his condescension and accessibility to the persons whom they so much despised. When the publicans and sinners drew near to hear Jesus, the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them ! "He is gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner !" He suffered the touch of a sinner ; and hence they argued that he could not be a prophet, though he came into the world expressly to save sinners.§

But the great cause of infidelity in the Jews generally, and a stumbling error to our Lord's own disciples, was their notion of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah. They expected him to

* Luke xvi. 19—24.

† John ix. 34 ; vii. 48, 49.

‡ Matt. xiii. 54—57.

§ Luke xv. 1, 2 ; xix. 7 ; vii. 39 ; Matt ix. 11—13 ; Luke xix. 10.

come with great pomp and splendour to deliver them from the power of the Romans,* to lead them to universal conquest, and to establish among them a kingdom that should outshine all others in worldly glory; in which, too, each hoped to obtain some distinguished post of honour and emolument. It was long before even the disciples, who constantly followed and sincerely loved their Lord, could get rid of these worldly and ambitious views. They were often questioning, and sometimes disputing, who should be greatest; and one direct application was made for seats on his right hand, and on his left, in his kingdom.†

Most explicitly did our Lord denounce all these worldly notions. The Pharisees demanded of him when the kingdom of God should come. He told them that it would not come with observation;‡ not with outward splendour and magnificent display, like the triumph of conquerors, or the coronation of kings. It was not a spectacle to be pointed at by the world, but was a spiritual kingdom set up in the hearts of men by the power of Divine grace. As to the apostles, who were indeed to be honoured as instruments in carrying on the affairs of the kingdom, their Lord absolutely forbade all ambitious views. He would not have them covet even names of authority;§ and he repeatedly taught

* It is observable, that the “false Christs,” against whom Jesus warned his disciples, (Matt. xxiv. 23, 24,) and who shortly afterwards appeared, made their way into popular favour by promising temporal deliverance. In several instances, by inciting the people to rebellion, they accelerated and aggravated the ruin of their country.

† Matt. xx. 20, 21.

‡ Luke xvii. 20.

§ Matt. xxiii. 8—12.

them by precept, by a beautiful emblem, and by his own example, that the greatest in his kingdom was the most humble and unassuming, the most condescending and serviceable to others.*

When arraigned at the bar on a charge of sedition, Jesus, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed the good confession that he was indeed a king, but that his kingdom was not of this world †—not of worldly origin—not aiming at worldly objects—nor governed by worldly principles ; not to be defended, or extended, or supported by the power of the sword ; not acknowledging worldly men as its subjects.

It is much to be regretted that Jewish errors, in one form or other, have been transplanted into the Christian church ; and, as we advance, we shall find that they have a nearer connexion with the subject in hand than might at first view be perceived.

* Matt. xviii. 1—4 ; xx. 25—28 ; John xiii. ; Luke xxii. 24—27.

† 1 Tim. vi. 13 ; John xviii. 36, 37.

CHAPTER III.

THE APOSTLES AND THEIR MINISTRY.

WHEN Jesus the Messiah entered on his public work, he chose twelve of his disciples and called them to a stated attendance on him.* These men were selected from the humbler walks of life; most of them were Galilean fishermen; and one (Matthew or Levi) was of the despised and abhorred race of publicans; as if to wean them all from their prejudices, and to familiarize them with the practice of their Divine Master, who received all men *as sinners*; and neither received nor rejected any on the ground of high or low birth, or rank in society; learning, or the want of it; place of residence, worldly calling, or previous character. In subsequent references to these persons, they are designated as “the twelve,” or “the twelve apostles.”

An apostle is one sent forth with the mandate of another. The mission of the twelve apostles was to preach the gospel, to bear witness to the resurrection of Christ, and to found the Christian church.† The gospel they had to preach was, that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the

* John i. 43; Mark iii. 13—19.

† Matt. xxviii. 18—20; Mark xvi. 15, 16.

living God, the Saviour of sinners. The church was to consist of all who should believe on Jesus, and, believing, should have life through his name.*

The gospel is a record of facts. It needed that these facts should be well attested, for on them was suspended the salvation of the world. Accordingly these twelve men were appointed as competent witnesses to the world of Christ's life, actions, miracles, instructions, death, and resurrection. One of the twelve was indeed an unworthy character, and became the betrayer of his Lord. It was not by oversight that he was admitted into the company. Jesus, from the first, well knew the treachery of his heart.† But though Judas betrayed Jesus, he was compelled, by the terrors of a guilty conscience, to testify that he had betrayed innocent blood. "His testimony is invaluable, because it was unwilling, the testimony not of a friend, but an enemy."‡ The placing Judas among the twelve, was a remarkable provision for increasing to the highest point the value of the testimony. Having attested the innocence of Christ's life, the wicked Judas sealed his testimony with his own blood. The other apostles lived to complete their evidence as witnesses of the death, resurrection, and ascension of their Divine Master. Their original number was made up by the addition of Matthias:§ and Paul was added subsequently to their number. It was not merely as observers and witnesses that the apostles were constantly with Jesus, but as hearers

* 1 Cor. xv. 1—4; John xx. 31.

† John vi. 64, 70, 71.

‡ Bp. Porteous.

§ Acts i.

also, that by his instructions, conversation, and devotions, they might be preparing for their great work. They were taught in private the meaning of many of the parables, and directed to treasure up these things, that they might afterwards dispense them to others.* They were sent forth by two† and two, to call the people to repentance, and to proclaim that the kingdom of God was at hand. They were endowed by their Divine Master with the power of working miracles, in confirmation of their mission; and though forewarned that trouble and persecution awaited them, throughout their whole course, they were encouraged to steadfastness and constancy at whatever cost, being assured of all needful support and assistance, and of a glorious reward at last.

The people in general were not expressly told that Jesus was the Messiah, but were left to infer it from his miracles and his doctrine. But the apostles were told more clearly, that he was the Christ,‡ the Son of God; and that he should die as a ransom for sinners, and rise again on the third day.

In the name of the rest, Peter nobly confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God.§ Jesus commended this confession, and declared that on this rock he would build his church, against which the gates of hell should never prevail. Jesus gave to the apostles authority,|| (of which keys were an emblem,) as his representatives in the church, to order all things according to his will,

* Matt. xiii. 36—52.

† Matt. x; Mark vi. 7.

‡ Matt. xvi. 21.

§ Matt. xvi. 13—19.

|| John xx. 21—23.

which they were infallibly taught by the Divine influences of the Holy Spirit, promised for that express purpose.

Just before his death, Jesus instituted his own supper, or the eating of bread and drinking of wine, in perpetual remembrance of him, and as emblems of his body broken and his blood poured out for the remission of sins.* At the same time Jesus plainly exposed the treachery of Judas; and forewarned Peter that he would deny his Master. He comforted the disciples under the prospect of losing his bodily presence, with the promise of the Holy Spirit to abide with them, and qualify them for their work. He explained to them the nature and benefits of his mediation; directed them henceforth to pray to the Father in his name; and prayed not only for his apostles then present, but for all who should believe on him through their word, that they all might be preserved, sanctified, united, and glorified.

Jesus then entered on the tremendous scenes of agony, suffering, and death. On his giving himself up to the Roman soldiers, all the disciples forsook him, and fled. Peter afterwards followed Jesus † to the palace of the high priest, where he so far fell as to deny his Lord, a sin of which he speedily and bitterly repented. John was certainly a witness of the crucifixion.‡

After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus many times appeared to his disciples.§ He renewed, confirmed, and extended the commission

* Matt. xxvi. 26—28; Mark xiv. 22—26; Luke xxii. 19, 20.

† Matt. xxvi. 69—75.

‡ John xix. 25.

§ John xx., xxi.

of the apostles, who, hitherto, had been sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,* but who were now commanded to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;† beginning, however, at Jerusalem;‡ and wherever they went, teaching all the laws and ordinances of Christ's kingdom, and relying on his promise to be with his believing people through successive generations, even to the end of time.§

Ten days after the ascension of the risen Saviour, the promised Spirit was miraculously poured out upon the apostles and other disciples who were assembled together. Immediately they were enabled to speak fluently in languages which they had never learned.|| The miracle attracted together vast numbers of people, many of them strangers and proselytes from distant nations, who each heard the apostles in their several languages. Peter in particular addressed the dwellers in Jerusalem, among whom Jesus had lived, and laboured, and died. He asserted that Jesus who was crucified was the true Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; and that sinners who repent and believe in him should be saved.¶

This is THE GOSPEL which all the apostles preached; and such were the effects attending their preaching, that thousands were converted and added to the church. The strangers who then received the gospel would carry it to the several countries where they dwelt; and this, in all probability, was the origin of some of the churches we

* Matt. x. 6.

† Luke xxiv. 47.

‡ Mark xvi. 17.

† Mark xvi. 15.

§ Matt. xxviii. 20.

¶ Acts ii.

read of in the New Testament—that of Rome in particular, which was a flourishing church apparently before it had been visited by either of the apostles.

The character of the earliest Christian church, that at Jerusalem, is beautifully described by the sacred writers, and, excepting in regard to numbers, was the same as that of the churches generally, on their first formation. “Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, and in prayer; and all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people; and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

Such devotedness, love, and gratitude to God, such superiority to the world, such cordial affection to one another, and such constraining influence on beholders, pervaded the apostolic churches in their earliest and best days.

Many specimens are given of the preaching of the apostles, all, like the first sermon, maintaining that the crucified Jesus was exalted at God’s right hand, a Prince† and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins; “neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”‡

* Acts ii. 41, 42, 44, 47; iv. 32—35.

† Acts v. 31.

‡ Acts iv. 12.

The fearless preaching of the apostles, and the notable miracles which they wrought in the name of Jesus, soon drew on them the persecution of which they had been forewarned. They were threatened, imprisoned, scourged, and in every way opposed. They, however, stedfastly pursued their course, and were on several occasions miraculously delivered.*

The first Christian martyr was Stephen.† The second was James, brother of John, and one of the twelve apostles.‡ These, indeed, are the only two of whose martyrdom we have any express account in Scripture. Antipas, in the Asiatic church of Pergamos, is also referred to.§

At the time of Stephen's martyrdom, Saul of Tarsus was a bitter persecutor, and for some time continued to breathe out threatening and slaughter against the disciples. But Jesus, whom he persecuted, arrested him in his mad career, called to him with a voice from heaven, subdued his enmity, and changed him to a humble, penitent, and devoted servant. By immediate revelation he was instructed in the knowledge of Christ; and by immediate authority he was constituted an apostle. During the persecution in which Saul was active, most of the disciples were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch; the apostles only remained at Jerusalem.|| The disciples, wherever they went, spread the glad tidings of the gospel; sinners were con-

* Acts v. 19, 20; xii. 5—16. † Acts vii.

‡ Acts xii. 1, 2. § Rev. ii. 13.

|| Acts vii. 58; viii. 1; ix. 1—30; 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33; Gal. i. 1, 11—20.

verted, and churches formed. The apostles, as occasions arose, visited these churches, and probably, at a later period, travelled to more distant parts ; but Scripture gives us no particular account of their labours, excepting those of the apostles Peter and Paul, and the companions of the latter. To Peter was assigned the honour of opening the door of faith to the Gentiles.* By especial revelation he was taught that all ceremonial distinctions which separated the Jews from other nations, were removed by the death of Christ ; that henceforth no meats were to be forbidden or abstained from as unclean, no person was to be shunned as uncircumcised, but that all were alike welcome to the blessings of the gospel, and the privileges of Christian society. After the introduction of Cornelius, the centurion, and other Gentile converts who associated with him, the ministry of Peter was principally exercised among those of the circumcision ; not only those resident in Judea and Samaria, but those scattered throughout the provinces of Asia† Minor.

The mission of Saul, afterwards called Paul, was chiefly among the Gentiles.‡ More than half the book of Acts is taken up with the narrative of his travels and labours in the cause of Christ. He was instrumental in planting most of the churches to which his apostolical epistles are addressed ; and, indeed, from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum, he fully preached the gospel of Christ,§ striving to carry the gospel where Christ had not before been named, and at the same time

* Acts x. ; xi. 1—19.

† 1 Pet. i. 1.

‡ Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

§ Rom. xv. 18—20.

caring for the establishment and prosperity of all the churches. His zealous labours exposed him to much persecution, both from the unbelieving Jews and the idolatrous Gentiles; and his life was frequently endangered; but none of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

The restless malignity of the Jews drove the apostle to plead his privilege as a Roman citizen, that of appealing to the Roman emperor. He was consequently sent as a prisoner to Rome, where he remained two years, dwelling in his own hired house, and preaching the gospel to all who came to him. During this time he wrote his Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians; also that to Philemon, a member of the church at Colosse. In all these Epistles he encourages his friends to stedfastness in that cause for which he was a willing and joyful sufferer.† We have no direct account of his release, but from some hints in the Epistles we gather that, on leaving Rome, he went into Judea, taking with him Timothy and Titus, but leaving Titus ‡ in Crete. From Macedonia the apostle wrote his First Epistle to Timothy, whom, on his way to Judea, he had left at Ephesus; also that to Titus. In a year, or rather more, having visited the churches in Greece and elsewhere, the apostle returned to Rome, where he was soon afterwards imprisoned. All we know

* Acts xx. 24.

† Phil. i. 12—30.

‡ Tit. i. 5; Heb. xiii. 23.

of his second imprisonment we gather from the Second Epistle to Timothy, when he had been twice brought before Nero, and was in immediate expectation of martyrdom ; yet not ashamed of the cause for which he suffered, but happy in the full assurance of his Saviour's power, grace, and faithfulness, and in expectation of the crown of life which awaited him.*

Of the later labours and sufferings of the apostle Peter we know very little with certainty. There is no proof that he ever was at Rome, but the tradition is, that in his old age he went to Rome, and was there put to death by crucifixion, according to his Lord's prediction.† This is stated to have been during Nero's persecution, and about the same time that Paul, as a Roman citizen, was beheaded : it is remarkable that his name is not mentioned in the Epistle to the Romans, nor in the Second Epistle to Timothy. The Second Epistle of Peter was evidently written under a vivid apprehension of his approaching dissolution.‡

James, the brother, or near kinsman, of our Lord, was stationed at Jerusalem, and perhaps superintended the affairs of the church there, while the other apostles were chiefly engaged in travelling to preach the gospel. On several occasions we find him taking an active part,§ or regarded by his brethren with high consideration. He wrote one short, but valuable Epistle. From the Jewish historian Josephus, as well as from the testimony of early Christian writers, we learn

* 2 Tim. i. 12 ; iv. 6—8.

† John xxi. 18, 19.

‡ 2 Pet. i. 13—15.

§ Acts xii. 7 ; xv. 13—21 ; xxi. 18 ; Gal. ii. 9.

that this apostle was a martyr for Christ, being thrown by the Jews from a battlement of the temple, and afterwards stoned.

Matthew is chiefly known to us as the writer of the Gospel history. We know that for a time the apostles remained together at Jerusalem. Of their dispersion and subsequent labours we have no particular account. Nor, in the case of Matthew and several others, have we any traces in the Epistles. The Gospel of Matthew, which was written in Hebrew for the use of the Jews, was, in all probability, written earlier than the others.

Jude, brother of James who wrote the Epistle, and, like him, a near kinsman of our Lord, wrote one short Epistle. Its exact date is not known ; but it appears designed to caution the Christians to whom it was addressed against the same deceivers as Peter, in his Second Epistle, had opposed.

John is the last of the apostles concerning whom we can gather any certain particulars. For many years we lose sight of him in the Scripture narrative. Wherever else he might labour, there is no doubt of his having preached in Asia, and resided some time at Ephesus : whither, it is generally supposed, the mother of our Lord accompanied him, and where she died. The Gospel of John was published much later than the books of the other evangelists ; most probably after the destruction of Jerusalem.

In the year 96 the emperor Domitian persecuted the church ; at which time the aged, and apparently the only surviving, apostle was banished to the isle of Patmos, in the Ægean Sea, where Jesus Christ appeared to him in vision, and instructed

him to write the book of Revelation. Two years afterwards, Nerva, the successor of Domitian, recalled all those whom his predecessor had banished ; and the apostle John returned to Ephesus, and there peacefully ended his days. It was very late in life that he wrote his three Epistles ; the First, general, or addressed to Christians as such, without being confined to any individual or society ; the Second, to a lady of quality, named Electa ; the Third, to Gaius, an eminent Christian distinguished for liberal hospitality. In this Epistle the writer speaks of giving an apostolical rebuke to the proud, overbearing, and uncharitable Diotrophes.

This apostle was highly honoured in being appointed to close the canon of Divine revelation, and to portray in mystical prospects the advancing glories and the final triumph of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Thus terminated the ministry of the apostles ; who, as immediate witnesses of gospel facts, and as original planters of the Christian church, could have no successors ; but whose inspired testimony, perpetuated in those sacred oracles which were written by them, or under their inspection, is the only authorized standard of Christianity to the end of time. Wherever Christ is preached, believed in, and obeyed, there, and there only, are true apostolical Christians and true apostolical churches.

CHAPTER IV.

ERRORS IN THE TIME OF THE APOSTLES.

To an attentive reader of the New Testament it is plain that errors, either in principle or practice, or in both, had crept into the churches in the apostles' time. Such evils gave occasion to apostolical warnings, cautions, rebukes, and discipline, which are left on record for the instruction of the church to the end of time. We have no reason to think that any of the early churches were wholly free from hypocrites and false professors; but full instructions were given how to deal with such characters, when their heresies or their evil practices were made manifest. Some few were dealt with immediately,* by inspired apostolical authority; yet in such a way as to impress salutary warnings applicable to all ages. But, in general, the course of proceeding was such as to be at all times and under all circumstances adopted. Those who departed from the faith, or from holy practice, were to be reproved, rebuked, admonished,† and, if they persisted in their sin,‡ to be put away, lest, like a little impure leaven, they should corrupt the

* Acts v. 1—11; viii. 23. † Eph. v. 11; 2 Tim. iv. 2.

‡ Tit. iii. 10; 1 Cor. v. 13; 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14, 15.

church;* and also that the censures of the church might prove the means of reclaiming the wandering. If they repented, they were to be restored in a spirit of love and meekness.†

The Jewish converts were most liable to one sort of error, and the Gentile converts to another. Many Jewish believers could not fully understand that the ceremonial law they had so long observed had ceased to be binding. They still observed the distinction of meats and days. Other Jewish believers understood their Christian liberty, and laid all these observances aside. In this case, all that the apostles deemed needful was to inculcate on both parties a spirit of love and forbearance, enjoining them not to despise or judge one another ; but in matters in themselves indifferent, to make mutual concessions for the sake of love, peace, and edification.‡

Some adherents to the Jewish ritual endeavoured to enforce the same observances on the Gentile converts. This matter was taken up by the apostles in solemn council ; and their inspired decree exempted the Gentiles from circumcision and other ritual observances.|| But this decision did not lay the matter at rest. Some bigoted Judaizing teachers crept into the Gentile churches, especially those in the region of Galatia, among whom they propagated their corrupt doctrine, drawing off the converts from the true gospel of salvation by Christ alone, and leading them to establish a righteousness of their own, by depending in whole or in part on ceremonial observances. This the apostle

* 1 Cor. v. 5—7.

‡ Rom. xiv.

† Gal. vi. 1 ; 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

|| Acts xv.

Paul deemed a fundamental error, and subversive of the whole gospel. He therefore wrote in the strongest terms, upbraiding the folly and inconsistency of those who had suffered themselves to be beguiled into a false dependence. He declared that the teacher of any other way of salvation than by the free mercy of God through the righteousness and atoning sacrifice of Christ, received by faith—let such teacher be man or angel—was and would be accursed.* The apostles knew how to bear with the weakness of their brethren, and to allow difference of judgment in things not essential; but they had no toleration for a system that struck at the glory of God and the salvation of man, by proposing any other ground for the justification of a sinner, than by faith † in Christ alone.

One error with which some of the Gentile churches were infected, was that of mingling the philosophy of the schools with the simple doctrine of Christ crucified. The Greek philosophers wished to polish the gospel, and conform it to some of their favourite systems; but the apostles plainly declared that, in saving guilty sinners through the crucifixion of his own Son, the blessed God had poured contempt on all the wisdom of the world, and made it appear perfect folly; that by exhibiting Christ as a complete and all-sufficient Saviour, God had cut off from man all pretext for boasting, and so ordered it that no flesh should glory in his presence.‡ “Beware,”

* Gal. i. 6—9; ii. 16; iii.

† See also Phil. iii. 2, 3; Heb. iii. 12—14; x. 23, 26—29.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 17—31.

wrote the apostle to the Christians at Colosse, "lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit; after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him."* It seems as if the corrupt teachers had blended together the systems of the Gentile philosopher, and the traditions and observances of the superstitious Pharisee, and so robbed the church of the simplicity that is in Christ. "But if Christ be completely qualified for his mediatorial work, and his people are completely furnished in him, they can have no need to seek additional instruction, wisdom, help, or encouragement, either from Jewish ordinances or heathen sages."† Well might the apostle exhort and warn his beloved son and fellow labourer—"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith."‡

Among Gentile Christians great errors and practical evils arose from their former habits of excess and uncleanness, which the pagan religion not only did not forbid, but even inculcated. Hence we find many cautions and exhortations that the Christian converts should no longer walk as other Gentiles walk.§

In the Corinthian church glaring abuses of the

* Col. ii. 8—23.

† Scott.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21; iv. 7; 2 Tim. ii. 16, 23; Tit. iii. 9.

§ 1 Cor. vi. 9—20; Ephes. iv. 17—23; v. 3—8; Col. iii. 5—10; 1 Thess. iv. 3—5; Rom. xiii. 13, 14; 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4.

Lord's supper appear to have arisen from the manner in which the members had been accustomed to celebrate the Grecian festivals, and the excess to which erroneous teachers carried their notions of Christian liberty ; so that they not only joined in the idolatrous feasts of the Gentiles, but even introduced the same abominable practices in connexion with the ordinances of Christ.*

Errors prevailed concerning the resurrection of the body. The philosophers at Athens treated the matter as a subject for ridicule rather than reasoning.† Some professing Christians, of whom Hymenæus and Philetus are named,‡ explained the doctrines of the resurrection in an allegorical or mystical sense, as though it meant the introduction of a new dispensation, or a change of character ; events in themselves, or in respect to Christians, already past, and so they denied the resurrection of the dead. A Sadducean or philosophizing spirit, or perhaps both combined, prevailed in the Corinthian church, and it was to some extent both taught and believed, that no future resurrection was to be expected. This gave occasion to the apostle Paul, not only to refute that heresy, but to pour a flood of light on that glorious doctrine of pure revelation, the resurrection of the body.§

One misapprehension against which the early Christians were warned, was that of literally expecting the immediate approach of the day of judgment. This erroneous expectation was likely to have a bad effect on the minds of the troubled

* 1 Cor. xi. 17—34 ; viii. ; x. 14—33.

† Acts xvii. 32.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 12—58.

Christians. It would take off their attention from present duty, and render them impatient under protracted sufferings. Scoffers also would hence take occasion to deride the hopes of Christians altogether. The apostle Paul charged the believing Thessalonians* not to entertain such unfounded expectations, assuring them that there would first come a grievous apostasy in the Christian church, the particulars of which he most strikingly describes ; adding, that the mystery of iniquity in which it would originate was already at work, but was retarded by some controlling power, on the removal of which the latent evil would soon develope itself.† The apostle Peter also affectionately reminded his fellow Christians of the sure words they had received from prophets and apostles, and furnished an answer with which to put to silence the ignorance of scorers.‡

One practical error, especially in the Corinthian church, was a party spirit, extolling one minister of Christ at the expense of another. This the apostle in writing to that church keenly reproved, as a mark of a carnal, worldly spirit, at variance with the spirit of Christianity, and hostile to the spiritual profit of those who indulged it ; moreover, that while persons are so eager about instruments, they forget that God employs them all, and that he alone can render them effectual.§

Another error in the same church was that of

* 2 Thess. ii. 1—12.

† The “signs and lying wonders,” the “deceivableness of unrighteousness,” the “strong delusion that they should believe a lie,” point out the antichristian power here referred to.

‡ 2 Peter iii.

§ 1 Cor. i. 12, 13 ; iii. 3—7.

priding themselves on their spiritual gifts; and being more concerned to obtain the most splendid than to employ the most useful. For instance, they coveted much to speak in an unknown tongue, not caring whether what was spoken were interpreted for general edification; but the apostle said, he would rather speak the shortest intelligible sentence, than make a long discourse by which none could be benefited. He also declared, that all the gifts that could be possessed, and all the actions that could be performed, were not equal to holy love, and indeed were of no value without it.*

Some errors arose from misapplying the just sentiments of Christian liberty and the efforts of Christian benevolence; for example, some misinformed persons fancied themselves released by their Christianity from civil obedience to masters and governors. Hence we find many apostolical injunctions, fully showing that those duties are not only consistent with Christianity, but essential and ornamental to it.†

Some were inclined to make Christianity a pretext for indolence, and for subsisting on the hospitality or liberality of others. What said the apostle Paul to such? That if any would not work, neither should he eat. He commanded and exhorted them by the Lord Jesus, that with quietness they should work and eat their own bread.‡

Then, there was a spirit of pride and domination. The man with the gold ring and gay

* 1 Cor. xii.; xiii.; xiv.

† See 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2; Tit. ii. 9, 10; iii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 13—17; Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

‡ 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12; 2 Thess. iii. 10—12.

clothing received homage, while the poor was despised and insulted.* Diotrephes “loved to have the pre-eminence,” received not the counsel of the apostle (John), and hindered the servants of the Lord.†

One leading error, the parent of many others, was that of wresting the Scriptures, perverting the doctrines of grace, turning them to lasciviousness, and denying obligations to duty. Against these abuses, all the sacred writers have recorded their testimony.‡

Many errors arose concerning the person and work of Christ. The apostle John speaks of “many antichrists.” Some denied the Divinity of Christ; some explained away his proper humanity, and the reality of his sufferings and death as an atoning sacrifice; and some maintained that, being saved by grace, they were not required to obey the commandments of God.§ These several heresies seem to have been much upon the mind of the last surviving and aged apostle, and his writings have an especial tendency to confute and counteract them.|| They are not indeed expressly named, excepting the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes,¶ mentioned with Divine abhorrence in the epistles to the churches; and those who taught the doctrine of Balaam,** licentious teachers who, knowing the truth, taught error and

* James ii. 1—4. † 3 John 9, 10.

‡ Rom. vi. 1, 2; Phil. iii. 18, 19; 2 Tim. ii. 19, 20; Tit. ii. 11—15; James ii. 17—26; 2 Pet. ii.; iii. 17; 1 John i. 6; iii. 7—9; Jude 4—19.

§ 1 John ii. 18; iv. 1—3; 2 John 7—11.

|| John i. 1—14. ¶ Rev. ii. 6, 15.

** Rev. ii. 11; Jude 11; 2 Pet. ii. 3, 15.

wickedness for filthy lucre's sake. It is impossible attentively to read either the Gospel of the evangelist John, or his apostolical letters, without perceiving that his especial mission seemed to be, to establish those fundamental truths, the Divinity and atonement of the Saviour. The Epistles of Peter and Jude foretold the heresies that actually disturbed the church at so early a period, as to be expressly met by their fellow apostle John. The predictions of Paul, in his Epistles to the Thessalonians and to Timothy, refer to a later period. Time however disclosed their full and exact accomplishment.

In tracing later errors, it is important to bear in mind the essential difference between the teaching of the apostles, and the teachings of error in their day : for in them we may discern the principles of truth and the principles of error, that have to the present day been at work.

“What must I do to be saved?” asks the trembling sinner. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” is the simple and decided answer of the apostles. “But,” says the Judaizer, “let a few of my observances be added, listen to the traditions of the elders ; at least observe the ritual law of Moses.” “Regard things,” says the Greek, “in the light of my sublime philosophy ; listen to my reasonings.” “No,” replies the apostle, “nothing but Christ crucified ; to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; but to them which believe, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” “But let us retain some distinction, some superiority of descent, or education, or

character.” “No—boasting is excluded. There is no difference.* By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God ; not of works, lest any man should boast.” † “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” ‡

But what is the tendency of these doctrines of grace ? The false teacher turns them to licentiousness, and takes leave to sin that grace may abound. § “God forbid,” says the apostle ; “how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein ?” “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” ||

It will be well also to bear with us a recollection of the way in which, by apostolical authority, error is to be resisted. “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and

* Rom. iii. 22, 27.

† Ephes. ii. 8, 9.

‡ Tit. iii. 5—7.

§ Rom. vi. 1.

|| Tit. ii. 11—14.

to convince the gainsayers.”* “In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.”† “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”‡

* Tit. i. 9.

† Tit. ii. 7, 8.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.

CHAPTER V.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH—EARLY DECLENSIONS.

ACCORDING to the prediction* of its Divine author, the gospel made its way with astonishing rapidity into the most noted countries and cities of the world. The word of the Lord went forth from Jerusalem,† and traversing in its course the land of Judea, reached Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus—the seats of empire, commerce, philosophy. It numbered among its converts persons from all ranks and stations of life, and it wrought in them, not merely a change in name or in sentiment, but a total change of heart and of conduct; they became just, charitable, chaste, temperate, meek, humble, heavenly-minded; religion with them was a reality; and they adhered to it at every risk and every sacrifice of reputation, property, family connexions, in many instances of life itself. The religion of these people did indeed bind them to God, and it also bound them to each other in a bond of love and brotherhood. Distance and other circumstances separated them in person, but they were all one in Christ Jesus. A member of one Christian com-

* Mark xiii. 10.

† Micah iv. 2.

pany was a member of all. They acknowledged one common Head, namely, Christ Jesus, their only Lord and Saviour. To him alone their consciences were subject, and his *laws*, as laid down in the New Testament, were their only rule and directory in all the affairs of religion. The writings of the evangelists and apostles furnished them with a perfect rule of faith and duty, and on all occasions their appeal was "to the law and to the testimony."*

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans was one important means of uniting Christians together, and of extending the triumphs of the gospel. Jesus Christ had plainly foretold it. The fulfilment was an evident attestation to the truth of his mission, to which the heralds of the gospel could powerfully appeal. Besides, the dispersion of the Jews freed the Christians in Judea from the deadly persecution under which they had suffered from their unbelieving brethren, and removed a great stumbling-block out of the way of weak believers, both among Jews and Gentiles. The services of the temple could no longer continue, when not one stone was left upon another; the tribes could no longer assemble at Jerusalem, when the city was laid in ruins; thus the consciences of the Hebrew converts were detached from the carnal ordinances of the Mosaic law; thus the efforts of Judaizing teachers to impose ceremonial observances on the Gentile converts were effectually neutralized; the middle wall of partition was undeniably broken down; the time was come when it was no longer required of men to go up to Jerusalem to worship, but the true

* Isa. viii. 20.

worshippers might every where worship him in spirit and in truth ;* and the word of the Lord had free course and was glorified.† The great thing contended for by the Judaizing teachers, and nobly contested against by the apostles, was the necessity of circumcision *in order to justification*. On the expulsion of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem, this controversy died away, and all Christians resting solely on justification by faith in Christ, they had one faith, and one hope, and were knit together in the fellowship of the gospel.

The early Christians, too, were much endeared to each other as brethren and companions‡ in tribulation. The world hated them, because they were not of the world. They realized the prophetic declaration of their Master,§ The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. And, by fellowship in suffering, they learned obedience to his new commandment,|| they loved one another ; and by this all men knew that they were his disciples, and said, “ See how these Christians love !”

This was truly one catholic church, consisting of all believers in Christ in every part of the world, but, as to actual communion, divided into numerous distinct churches, in various localities. Wherever there was a Christian congregation there was a church ; complete in itself, yet a part of the universal body in Him of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.¶

To those who are thoroughly convinced, or rather conscious, of the depravity of human nature,

* John iv. 24. † 2 Thess. iii. 1. ‡ Rev. i. 9.

§ John xv. 19, 20.

|| John xiii. 34, 35.

¶ Eph. iii. 15.

of the remains of corruption that cleave to the best of men in this imperfect state, and of the influence of early habits and associations never entirely obliterated, and of surrounding circumstances never entirely overcome, it will not be matter of surprise that the harmony of the church was not long uninterrupted, nor its purity long unsullied. Error and division soon crept in.

There is no question that the inlet to error and strife was a gradual substitution of "the words which man's wisdom teacheth"* for the "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The Bible itself is easy to be understood. The wayfaring man, though unlearned, may take it as his guide, and shall not err.† But the advocates of Christianity too soon began to adapt their modes of expression to suit the philosophers of the age. They defined their articles of faith with systematic precision, and in the phraseology of the schools. Thus they unconsciously mixed their own opinions with the doctrines of Christ. They attempted to define, and account for, and explain, where their duty was simply to believe and obey what was written. Nor were they satisfied without enforcing their definitions and explanations on others. The consequence was, they were charged with error. Too often their antagonists, not content with simple appeals to Scripture, set up opposite definitions, comparisons, and terms of science, not less improper and erroneous than those they opposed. "A man who intends to make a crooked plant straight, sometimes bends it too much the other way;"‡ and

* 1 Cor. ii. 13.

† Isa. xxxv. 8.

‡ Basil.

angry disputants generally leave truth between them. Thus the peace of the church and the prevalence of pure truth were soon interrupted. Men very early began to build “ wood, hay, stubble,”* upon the foundation of Christ. “ Not content with the simplicity and plainness of the gospel, which could not possibly furnish materials for strife and contention, vain men soon began to mix their own opinions with the doctrines of Christ, and had no other way to give them weight and authority but by endeavouring to force their dogmas upon the faith of others ; and out of this bramble a fire† proceeded which has devoured the cedars of Lebanon ; or, as the prophet Ezekiel expresses himself concerning the vine of Israel, ‘ A fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit.’‡ From a desire of being ‘ many masters,’§ from a desire of mutually forcing men’s opinions upon others, instead of exhorting them to study and obey the gospel of Christ, have arisen strifes and contentions, hatred and uncharitableness, schisms and divisions, without end. From a zeal for the religion and commands of Christ, a concern for the promotion of truth, righteousness, and charity, it is evident in the nature of things, and the experience of all ages, that wars and fightings, hatred and animosities, never have nor ever can proceed. These fruits have always sprung from those roots of bitterness, a zeal for the doctrines and commandments of men, a striving for temporal power and dominion.” ||

* 1 Cor. iii. 12.

† Judges ix. 15.

‡ Ezek. xix. 14.

§ James iii. 1.

|| Dr. Samuel Clarke, Sermons, vol. iii. Sermon. xiv.

From very early historical documents,* it is evident that, even in the second century, some deviations had obtained from the injunctions of Christ,† and the example of his inspired apostles.‡ Distinctions had arisen which Christ had not instituted, and which did not tend to edification. There was a degree of assimilation to the Jewish priesthood, at least likely to becloud the views of the people, and take them off from immediate approach to, and simple reliance on, the one Mediator. It is true that names are but sounds, but “those who are conversant with the history of mankind will readily allow that they have a greater influence on the generality of men than most people are aware of. Besides, it is of the nature of power, unless it be guarded by a watchful jealousy, such as is rarely to be found in inexperienced and undesigning people, to accumulate and gather strength. Distinguish one at first but by a small degree of superiority, and the distinction made will very soon, and, as it were, naturally, carry every other distinction along with it. There is something here that resembles gravitation in material things, as the quantity of matter increases its attractive force increases, and it more easily draws other matter to itself.” §

The beginning of error generally seems harmless. To use the similes of Bishop Jewel, “A thorn when young is soft and gentle; you may thrust at it with your finger, it will not hurt you; but after it waxes and grows hard and stubborn

* Letters of Ignatius.

† Matt. xx. 25—28.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 1—3.

§ Campbell's Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, Lect. vi.

it will pierce the flesh and draw blood. A bear, when he is young, is harmless and innocent, you may dandle it, and play with it as with a whelp; it hath no teeth to bite, nor paws to tear; but afterwards it will grow and become fierce and cruel like the sire. A serpent, when it is young, is little and pretty, it has no sting nor poison; you may take it in your hand, and lay it in your lap, it will not hurt you; afterwards it will increase in venom, and grow in mischief, and be like itself; then it will shake the sting and cast poison, and prove dangerous.”* The all but imperceptible changes of the second century carried in them the germ of Popery. Nor ought we, in our veneration for the excellent men, and faithful martyrs of Christ, whose histories and writings have been† handed down to us, to lose sight of the fact, that the “law of the Lord” alone “is perfect,”‡ and the slightest deviation from it is sinful and dangerous.

* Bishop Jewel, on the Second Epistle to Thessalonians.

† Not without suspicion as to the channel through which they have passed.

‡ Psal. xix. 8.

CHAPTER VI.

ERROR AND SUPERSTITION PROGRESSIVE.

MANY errors and superstitions, especially those of an early date, originated in refining upon what was commanded, or in carrying to extremes what was not in itself improper. How beautifully simple and significant are the ordinances of the gospel! Baptism, the purifying element of water, employed as an outward emblem—nothing more—of the washing* away of sin, and the renewing† of the Holy Ghost; the subject of it professedly a partaker in the death and resurrection of Christ, that like as‡ Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so he also should walk in newness of life.

The Lord's supper, to keep in lively§ remembrance the atoning death of Christ, and the Christian's participation of it by faith; represented by the significant actions of eating bread, as an emblem of his broken body; and drinking wine, as an emblem of his flowing blood.

But at no distant period from the institution of these ordinances we find indications of confounding

* Acts xxii. 16. † Tit. iii. 5. ‡ Rom. vi. 4.
 § Luke xxii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 23—26.

together the sign with the thing signified, and also of adding uncommanded ceremonies as significant of something else. In the second century, Justin Martyr,* and in the third, Cyprian call baptism regeneration, in such a way that, if it did not indicate confusion of mind in the good men who wrote, was at least very likely to mislead those who read ; and, in fact, these statements have often been appealed to in proof of their holding the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Christ and his apostles† regarded the preaching of the gospel a nobler work than baptizing, which they generally deputed to others ; and, ordinarily, those who taught the converts baptized them ;‡ but when human wisdom had given to the church “ a system of fixed laws, then the right of baptizing the Christian converts was vested in the bishop alone.” § Then one ceremony after another was added ; oil, to signify the anointing of the Holy Spirit ; salt, to signify wisdom ; milk and honey, (the food of babes,) to signify nourishment in grace, etc., etc. No wonder that the simple idea of an ordinance of Christ was lost sight of, and baptism was termed a “ mystery ! ” No wonder that people came to think that their sins were actually washed away, and they actually regenerated by baptism ; that distinctions were made between sins before and after baptism, and that, in consequence, baptism was deferred, sometimes till the subject was at the point of death, that this one efficacious cleansing might avail for the sins of his

* Apology addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius.

† John iv. 2 ; Acts x. 48 ; 1 Cor. i. 17.

‡ Acts viii. 12, 38 ; ix. 18. § Mosheim, vol. i. 94.

whole life ! Was it possible that all this superstition could fail to take off the attention and faith of men from the Scripture truth, that “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin?”* There were, doubtless, differences of opinion, and of practice. Tertullian, a Christian apologist, early in the third century, thought it “profitable to delay baptism, especially as to little children,” on two grounds : that of bringing the sponsor into needless danger ; “because,” says he, “either they may by death be prevented from fulfilling their promises, or be deceived by the child proving of a bad disposition :” and, further, because he deemed it unnecessary for “that *innocent age* to hasten to the *remission of sins*.”† His contemporary, Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, convened a council of sixty-six bishops to consider whether infants ought to be baptized on the eighth day, in conformity to the Jewish rite of circumcision, or whether it might not be *dangerous* to delay baptism so long. Both the good men evidently attached to the outward observance the spiritual benefits of which it is but the sign.

Of Christ’s dying ordinance Justin Martyr, in the apology above referred to, thus speaks : “Bread, and wine, *and water*, are brought, and the president offers prayers in like manner, and thanksgiving according to his ability : and the people express their assent by saying ‘Amen,’ and the distribution of that over which the thanksgiving has been pronounced takes place to each, and each partakes, and a portion is sent to the absent by the

* 1 John i. 7.

† Tertullian, Treatise on Baptism, book ii. chap. 18.

deacons." On this we ask, Why *water*? Jesus, when he instituted the ordinance, took *wine*. "But water, together with blood, flowed from the Redeemer's side * when on the cross he was pierced for our sins." True ; a good reason for our remembering the fact, and endeavouring to appropriate the sacred instruction it is designed to convey ; but not a reason for adulterating a Divine ordinance, to which implicit and exact obedience should be rendered. A portion of the elements is "carried to the sick or absent members of the church, as a testimony of fraternal love sent to them by the whole society."† Had the meal been an ordinary social repast, it would have been an act of friendly love and hospitality to send portions to those for whom nothing was prepared ;‡ but in instituted rites deviations are dangerous. In this respect truly good men have often begun things of which they little considered the end. Very soon a superstitious reverence was paid to bread and wine which had been consecrated by the bishop. It appears that the priests, or inferior clergy, as they were now called, were accustomed to reserve a portion for the purpose of administering to sick and dying persons. Eusebius § relates that an aged Christian, named Serapion, had fallen away in time of persecution, but, being penitent, he had very often entreated that he might be received again into the church, but none gave ear unto him, because he had sacrificed. (What a

* John xix. 34, 37.

† Mosheim, vol. i. 155.

‡ Neh. viii. 10.

§ Euseb., Letter of Dionysius to Fabius, book vi. chap. 43.

mercy it was for Peter—what a mercy it is for the penitent backslider now, to go directly to Him who knows * all things, and who is always ready to receive and forgive!) The old man was struck with the palsy, and lay speechless and senseless for several days. Reviving a little, he called his grandson, and bade him hasten for a priest to absolve him. The boy went. It was night. The priest was sick and could not come with him. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, having given commandment, that dying penitents, if they humbly requested it, should be received, to the end that, being strengthened in faith, they might depart in peace; the priest gave the boy a little of the eucharist, bidding him to crumble or soak it, and so drop it into the old man's mouth; "whereof when he had tasted a little, forthwith he gave up the ghost. Is it not manifest (says Dionysius) that this old man was so long held back until he were *absolved and loosed from the link of sin* by confessing, in the presence of many, the fault he had committed?" The confession referred to was most likely made when the penitent in vain solicited to be received again into church communion. The absolution was evidently, in the mind of the narrator, confined to the act of receiving the sacrament. How refreshing to turn from priests and ceremonies to Him who, "if we confess our sins, is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness!"†

On the above narration Milner has justly remarked, that "the connexion between the

* Mark xiv. 72; xvi. 7; John xxi. 17; vi. 37; Heb. iv. 15; vii. 25.

† 1 John i. 9.

sacrament and the grace conveyed by it, being usually thus expressed, as if it were necessary and indissoluble, both in baptism and the Lord's supper, gave occasion to the increase of much superstition in the church. I am disposed to believe, and certainly to hope, that both Dionysius and Serapion knew that the sign was nothing without the inward grace. Yet they are not to be acquitted of superstition on account of the inordinate stress which they laid on external things. The reader must observe, that this evil continued to grow during the third century."

The writings of Tertullian, already quoted on the subject of baptism, indicate that a spirit of self-righteousness and superstition had very much overspread some, if not all, of the churches in Africa. His own train of thinking is very much tinged with it. He lays great stress on wearing, or not wearing, certain articles of dress, or civil distinction, fasting at certain seasons, and feasting at others, frequently marking the forehead with the sign of the cross, etc., etc., and adds, "For these and such like rules (observed in the African churches) if thou requirest a law in the Scripture, thou shalt find none. Tradition must be pleaded to thee as originating them, custom as confirming them, and faith as observing them."* "His treatise on repentance is meagre and dismal throughout; and while it enlarges on outward things, and recommends *prostration of the body to the priest*, is very slight on the essential spirit of repentance itself."

"Repentance," it has been beautifully observed,

* Tertullian's Works, "Of the Military Crown," 337.

“is the tear of love, dropping from the eye of faith, on a sight of Christ crucified.” “I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn.”* This gospel promise, in the times of the apostles, was eminently fulfilled, when to the Jews, and also to the Gentiles, God granted repentance unto life;† and both were enabled to manifest the truth of their repentance by bringing “forth fruits meet for repentance.”‡ But this course was too simple for the wisdom and policy of man; the penitent must be directed to prostrate himself before the priest, and to undergo bodily chastisements or privations as the punishment of his sins. Penance, or something to be performed by the sinner as a sort of qualification or preparation for the forgiveness of sins, was admitted into the Christian church as early as the year 157. Assuredly it did not find its origin or foundation in Scripture.

The second and third centuries have been justly termed “the age of martyrs.” From the year 64, when the Roman emperor Nero began his persecution, under which the apostles Paul and Peter were put to death, to the death of Galerius, in 311, the Christians endured a great fight of afflictions and persecutions from the heathen governors. It does not comport with the design of this little work to enter into the details of that most affecting and animating portion of history, further than as it furnishes illustrations of our immediate object, namely, to show how error in

* Zech. xii. 10.

† Acts xi. 18.

‡ Matt. iii. 8.

principle or practice crept in unsuspected, but at length attained the fearful height of Popery.

How honourable a character is the faithful martyr, he who calmly bears reproach, contempt, and opposition, and steadily pursues his way, “rejoicing that he is accounted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus;”* whom afflictions, bonds, imprisonment cannot move; who counts not his life dear unto himself, so that he may finish his course with joy;† who is faithful unto death and receives the crown of life!‡ Of many such we read with holy delight, and we glorify God in them.§ Yet we cannot avoid seeing, that in those days of cruel persecution the honour put upon martyrdom was excessive. In some persons there was a degree of impetuosity and rashness in thrusting themselves on their persecutors before they were providentially called to suffer, not according to the precepts|| or the example of their Divine Master, nor, with one exception, those of his apostles. That exception was the case in which Peter in his affectionate and ardent zeal said, “Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.” “I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.” “If I should die with thee, I will not in any wise deny thee. Likewise also said they all.”¶ The result proved that Jesus knew his disciples better than they knew themselves.** In the days of persecu-

* Acts v. 41. † Acts xx. 24. ‡ Rev. ii. 10.

§ Gal. i. 24.

|| Matt. x. 23; Luke iv. 3; John v. 13; vii 30; Acts ix. 25, 30.

¶ John xiii. 37; Luke xxii. 33; Mark xiv. 31.

** Matt. xxvi. 56, 69—75.

tion, some who had presented themselves of their own accord before the heathen tribunal, striving as it were for the crown of martyrdom, and had persuaded others to do so too, were the first to fall back from the actual trial. Even among the really steadfast, some were characterized by calm patience and others by impatient zeal. Polycarp and Cyprian, in this respect, present a contrast to Ignatius, though all were nobly faithful and heroic. "But Polycarp was much older than he was when Ignatius suffered, and very probably had grown in grace." "To unite such seemingly opposite things as discretion and fortitude, each in a very high degree, is a sure characteristic of greatness in a Christian; it is grace in its highest exercise."

How touching are the following simple statements; and how do they appeal to what may almost be termed an inherent principle of human nature—respect for the remains of departed friends!—"So Ignatius was led into the amphitheatre at Rome, and speedily thrown to the wild beasts. The beasts were his grave; a few bones only were left, which his friends gathered up, carefully preserved, and conveyed them to Antioch for burial."—The blessed Polycarp having passed through martyrdom to receive the crown of life, "the envious, subtle, and malicious enemy of the just, procured that his body should perish from among us; for there were many that endeavoured and fully purposed to have been partakers of his blessed body by burial. But many urged Nicetus, the father of Herod, to persuade the proconsul not to deliver the body to the Christians, lest, say they,

‘they, leaving the Crucified One, should fall to worshipping of him.’ This they said when the Jews urged them forwards ; who also continually watched us lest that we snatched his body out of the fire. But they are ignorant of this, that we can never forsake Christ who died for the salvation of the whole world ; that we can worship none other ; for we worship Christ as the Son of God. The martyrs we love, as disciples and followers of the Lord ; and that worthily, for the invincible good love they bore to their King and Master, whose companions and disciples we desire to be. When the centurion perceived the sedition of the Jews, he caused the body to be laid in the midst [of the pile] after their accustomed manner, to be burned. So we gathered his bones, more precious than pearls and better tried than gold, and buried them in the place that was fit for the purpose, where, God willing, we being gathered together, the Lord will grant that with joy and gladness we may celebrate the birth-day of his martyr ; both for remembrance of such as have been crowned before, and stirring up of such as shall hereafter strive.”*

“As to the dead bodies of the martyrs, they were treated with every possible and conceivable indignity. They were thrown to the dogs, and watched day and night lest their friends should bury them. Their bodies were mutilated in the most shameful manner ; and the mangled carcasses, after being exposed six days, were consumed to

* Eusebius, p. 67, Book IV. chap. xv.

ashes and cast into the river; the enemies of the Christians hoping, as they said, to disappoint them of a resurrection.”*

But the most amiable and virtuous feelings may be carried to excess. Those who in ordinary circumstances lose a beloved friend, and preserve as a treasure, almost a sacred treasure, a lock of his hair or a scrap of his handwriting, can easily conceive, that in the peculiar case of the Christians losing their friends by a violent death, denied the sad consolation of quietly committing their remains to the grave, and distressed by witnessing the insults and indignities heaped on what was, just before, the organized habitation of that now happy spirit with which they used to hold pious intercourse, there would be a danger of their regarding with too great veneration the “few bones” or other fragments which they had succeeded in snatching away and secreting from their persecutors. Would they not be gazed on as sacred relics, and with reluctance, if at all, conveyed to share the common lot of “dust to dust?” Would it not be quite possible for a lively imagination to invest them with peculiar fragrance, and even to fancy that some healing influence was connected with their presence? It is very evident that such “amiable sentimentalism” was extensively cherished, and at no very distant period it was made a specific charge against certain reputed schismatics, that “they did not pay due reverence to the martyrs, nor allow that there was any virtue in their

* Jones’s Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. 219; also Eusebius, p. 80, Book V. chap. i.

relics.”* Little did those pious Christians who first gave countenance to the superstition imagine the height of absurdity and idolatry to which it would grow.

The days on which martyrs suffered death, or those on which they died in prison, or in consequence of ill-treatment for bearing their faithful testimony to Christ, were celebrated with joy and triumph, as the days of their birth to immortality and glory. A register of these events was carefully preserved, and the anniversaries commemorated. The places of their sepulture, if known and accessible, were on these occasions visited and oblations presented. “Donations brought at the anniversary festivals in honour of the martyrs, were given to the poor for the sake, and in the name, of the departed saints. They were offerings *to* the poor *for* the dead martyrs.” How speedily this practice degenerated into error and superstition, we may infer from the fact, that as early as the third century, and very generally in the fourth century, prayers were offered for the dead ; not for the dead in general, but for the pious dead, those whom the supplicants doubted not were already enjoying “fulness of joy in God’s presence, and pleasures for evermore.” “They prayed for patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, confessors, apostles, and for the virgin Mary.” The object of their prayers was for the happy resurrection of their bodies. Where in the New Testament could they find precept or precedent for such a practice? With sorrow we must confess that, even at that early period, the

* Dr. Adam Clarke, “Succession of Sacred Literature.”

pure light of gospel truth was not strictly followed, and the false light of human authority and tradition led the credulous astray into the adoption of heathen practices; for in almost every instance, if not universally, these superstitious observances may be traced to a heathen origin.* The transition from praying *for* departed saints to praying *to* them was easy, and we are not surprised to find that in the fourth century some began to invoke and present offerings to the virgin Mary. This practice commenced in the eastern churches, among those who in their pagan state had been accustomed to present cakes and other offerings to the heathen goddess Venus, Astarte, or the moon; which on their profession of Christianity they transferred to the virgin Mary.† This superstition was condemned in the strongest terms by Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis, and the practice was by no means general, though there was a gradual veering towards it. To this we shall have occasion to advert hereafter.

A little more remains to be said about the martyrs. The “lapsed” (those who had fallen from their Christian profession in the time of persecution) resorted to a singular method to facilitate their restoration to the church without the long and painful course of penitential discipline, which

* The reader is referred to an excellent tract translated from the French, and published by the Religious Tract Society. It is entitled “Pagan Rome,” and proves by unquestionable authority that all the leading abuses and corruptions of the Christian church had their counterpart and origin in the practices of heathenism.

† Mosheim, vol. i. p. 318. Elliott’s Delineation of Romanism, p. 761.

their case was deemed to require. They would apply to the steadfast about to suffer martyrdom for letters of peace and reconciliation ; a sort of dying testimony that the martyrs looked upon the persons to whom they gave the document as worthy of communion, and a request that they might be restored to their place among the brethren. Whether this indulgence ought to be granted was warmly contested. It was generally found liable to abuse, and apparently was discontinued. It shows, however, a relaxed state of discipline, that any thing apart from repentance, proved sincere by corresponding conduct, should be taken as a recommendation to renewed church-fellowship. Even the apostle did not solicit it of the Corinthians as a favour to himself, but enjoined it as a matter of duty from the church to their penitent brother.* The care, too, expressed by Cyprian and others, (especially in a time of general sickness,) that “ penitents, *whose lives might be in danger*, should, by such officers as were authorized, be readmitted into the church,” (as in the case of the old man Serapion,) indicates a superstitious regard to the outward privilege, rather likely to divert the attention and divide the dependence of the penitent than to fix them on Christ alone. But, however this might be in individual cases, knowing as we do to what these deviations from primitive order have led, we cannot but feel jealous of the first diverging.

It has been stated that “ the first Christians assembled for worship in private houses, in caves,

* 2 Cor. ii. 7—11.

and in vaults where the dead were buried,"* and it has been commonly supposed that they did so from choice, and as attaching a peculiar sanctity to the houses in which the martyrs resided, or the places in which their mortal remains reposed. But it is more probable that at first they sought these retreats for the sake of concealment from their persecuting enemies. The catacombs in the neighbourhood of Rome, to the present day an object of deep interest to the traveller, in the early ages of Christianity were the common resort of the persecuted Christians in that neighbourhood. They are immense mines or quarries, excavated for a particular kind of earth used in the Roman buildings. They had been long closed as mines before the Christian era. In these places the Christians concealed themselves from the rage of their persecutors. Like those Old Testament believers "of whom the world was not worthy;" who, "destitute, afflicted, tormented,—wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth,"† the persecuted Christians gathered in crowds into these dark caverns. "They flitted among them like spectres, startling and frightening each other as meeting suddenly in these graves of the living; now shrinking in terror as from an approaching enemy, and now meeting with joyous thankfulness a faithful friend. There must have been a powerful bond of brotherhood created by scenes like these, by a consciousness of common danger and mutual dependence, and by the fact that they all were sufferers for the same high and

* Mosheim, vol. i. 151.

† Heb. xi. 38.

holy cause, and were all knit together by the strongest ties of Christian brotherhood ; and they lived together, encouraging and comforting one another by that with which they were themselves comforted of God, by the enduring, ennobling hope of eternal life.”* The employment of the catacombs as places of refuge for the persecuted Christians, naturally led to their becoming places for Christian worship. “There they knelt and prayed, and praised, and read together, and these long passages and dreary caverns resounded with the words of prayer and with the hymns of praise, and with the reading of the word, and with the preaching of the gospel.” Even when persecution so far relaxed as that the Christians were permitted to return to their habitations, there was no relaxation of violence against any thing like a public celebration of Christian worship. It was necessary to conduct it with the strictest secrecy, and the catacombs continued to form their sanctuary. Thither they secretly resorted in the silent hours of night, to join in the common service and in the holy communion of their Saviour’s death. Add to this, these caves were indeed the graves of many of the martyrs. Those Christians who fled there and found safety, were not unmindful of their brethren who did not escape, and who were condemned to the sword, or to the scaffold, or to the wild beasts in the Colosseum. They used to steal forth from their hiding-places by night, and bear away the mangled bodies and scattered bones of those martyred men ; and, bringing them among

* Mornings with the Jesuits, p. 324.

their brethren, thank God for the faithfulness of their testimony, and pray to be enabled to follow the example of their patience and faith ; and then bury them in the recesses of the catacombs.

This is a delightful picture of primitive Christianity, and the faith, love, steadfastness, and simplicity of the early Christians. It is painful that, at a later period, in their religious and social observances, as well as in the elements of their communion, the wine was mingled with water.* The declensions seem to have taken place during the intervals of persecution. Cyprian and other Christian writers, in very strong terms, describe and deplore the relaxation of discipline and manners, the decay of the spirit of genuine godliness ; and, just in proportion as these declined, the simplicity of the gospel was departed from, and ceremonial observances multiplied.

Some of the early heretics, especially the Gnostics, defended their doctrines and practices by pretending that the religion which Christ propounded was of two sorts, the one easy of comprehension, and adapted to the common people, the other sublime, and to be understood only by persons of refined intellect ; the former they said was contained in the books of the New Testament ; the latter they professed to have derived from certain companions of the three apostles, Peter, Paul, and Matthew. Others among them said that their leading maxims and principles were drawn from the oracles of Zoroaster, which they mixed up with some part of the New Testament, excluding such

* Isa. i. 22.

parts as manifestly opposed their system, and substituting instead fictitious Gospels and Epistles. It is hard to say what systems of error and vice might not be built on such a foundation.

A modified sense of the double doctrine, without its most corrupt additions, was adopted by some true, but mistaken Christians, who thought to attain superior holiness by severities and mortifications not enjoined in Scripture. The precepts of the gospel they considered obligatory upon all orders of men—*counsels*, as they termed them, (in other words, human traditions, and refinements on Scripture,) were adapted only to Christians of a more exalted rank: for example, sobriety, moderation, and temperance in all the allowed indulgences of animal nature, are expressly and uniformly enjoined on all Christians.* Occasional fasting or abstinence is certainly spoken of as a Christian† duty, and is both reasonable and beneficial, if used only as a means to an end, that of invigorating the principles of devotion and self-control, and promoting humility and purity of heart. “Unhappily, however, from the propensity of the human mind to run into extremes, from an increasing fondness for the Platonic philosophy, and from an indiscriminate imitation of what is recorded in Scripture, concerning some holy men when placed‡ in extraordinary circumstances, and our blessed Lord himself, § but which were never designed for the imitation of ordinary Christians,

* Eph. v. 17, 18; Phil. iv. 5, 8; Rom. xiii. 14; 1 Cor. ix. 27. † Matt. vi. 16—18.

‡ Exod. xxxiv. 28; 1 Kings xix. 8.

§ Matt. iv. 1, 2.

—from the combined operation of all these causes fasting, instead of being considered as a salutary discipline, or as a means of promoting holiness, came to be regarded as holiness itself. The piety of men came to be estimated by the frequency and severity of their fastings. In proportion as they subjected themselves to greater privations and hardships, they acquired a higher reputation for sanctity. Thus a kind of rivalry was excited; new and strange methods were invented of macerating and torturing the body; till at length extravagance in practice led to error in principle; fasts and mortifications were regarded as meritorious in themselves, as procuring, by their intrinsic efficacy, the pardon of sin and the favour* of Heaven."

Such is the origin and progress of voluntary fastings and mortifications, which, however, we do not doubt were at first taken up by some sincere Christians with good, but mistaken motives.

Eusebius relates† that Alcibiades, one of the martyrs in France, had, before the persecution, led the life of an ascetic. He used to subsist only on bread and water. As he continued the same regimen in prison, his fellow prisoner, Attalus, after his first contest in the amphitheatre, reproved the abstinence of Alcibiades, saying, that it had been revealed to him, in a dream or vision, that Alcibiades did ill not to use the creatures of God, and that he gave occasion of scandal to others. Alcibiades was hence induced to change his diet, and to partake of the bounties of Providence with

* Jones's Ch. Hist. vol. i. p. 326.

† Euseb., p. 81, Book V. chap. 3.

thanksgiving. Origen is celebrated as an amazing monument of industry and self-denial. He was the son of a Christian who was martyred, his property confiscated, and his family left in destitution. Origen, quite a youth, commenced the office of teacher, and by that employment supported himself, his widowed mother, and family. This was truly honourable. After a time he was called to a divinity professorship in the Christian school of Alexandria. On this he left off private teaching and sold all his books of profane literature, for which he made this singular bargain, that the purchaser should allow him four oboli* a day, on which he contrived to live ; and now he began to practise the greatest austerities. He deprived himself of needful repose, devoting not only the day, but also the greater part of the night, to religious study. He observed literally our Lord's direction, on one occasion, to his apostles, of not having two coats nor two pairs of shoes. He inured himself to cold, nakedness, and poverty. In general he lived so abstemiously as to endanger his life : and grieved his friends, by refusing to accept their free-will offerings for his support and comfort. Did he affect a superiority to Paul ? or did he forget the spirit of cheerful gratitude with which that holy apostle received the liberality† of his Philippian friends ? Origen became exceedingly popular, and many persons admired and imitated his excessive austerities. Milner says, " A spirit of self-righteousness, meeting with a secret ambi-

* The obolus, a Grecian coin, was in value the sixth part of a drachma, or about five farthings of our money.

† Phil. iv. 10—18.

tion too subtle to be perceived by him who is the dupe of it, and supported by a natural fortitude of mind, and by the active exertion of great talents, has enabled many in external things to seem superior in piety to men of real humility and self-diffidence; who, penetrating more happily into the genius of the gospel, by the exercise of faith in the Son of God, and that genuine charity which is its fruit, are led into a course of conduct less dazzling indeed, but much more agreeable to the gospel." "Excesses of this sort must have been attended with defects in inward vital godliness." The above judicious remarks deserve the attention of some in the present day, who, with well-intended, but ill-regulated zeal, aspire to superior degrees of holiness by unscriptural austerities.*

During the prevalence of persecution, many pious Christians, of both sexes, justly accounting that no human felicity ought to come in competition with fidelity to Christ, and distrusting their own steadfastness and perseverance in resisting the temptations to apostasy with which they were continually harassed, took the resolution to abandon their possessions and worldly prospects, and, while the storm lasted, to retire to unfrequented places far from the haunts of men, that they might enjoy in quietness their faith and hope, and employ themselves principally in worship and meditation. The cause was reasonable, and the motive praiseworthy. But the reasonableness arose solely from the circumstances of the case. When the latter were changed the former vanished, and the motive

* Col. ii. 18—23.

could no longer be the same. Accordingly, when matters got into a more tranquil state, and the profession of Christianity was rendered perfectly safe, many returned from their retirement, and lived like other men. Some, however, familiarized by time to a solitary life, at length preferred, through habit, what they had originally adopted through necessity. They did not waste their time in idleness, but supported themselves by their industry, and bestowed the surplus in charity. The first distinct account of a Christian hermit is that of Paul of Thebais, in Egypt. He was a young man possessing a good patrimony. He had a married sister, with whom he lived. Her husband, in order to obtain his estate, was base enough to design an information against him as a Christian. Paul, having notice of this purpose, retired to the desert mountains, where he intended to wait only till the persecution ceased. But habit had rendered solitude agreeable to him. He found a pleasant retreat and lived there ninety years. His retirement was about the year 250, when he was twenty-three years of age. He died at the age of one hundred and thirteen. “The increasing spirit of superstition soon produced a number of imitators of Paul, and the most lamentable effect was, that those who possessed only external religion, placed their righteousness and their confidence in monastic austerities ; and thus, from the depraved imitations of well-meant beginnings, one of the strongest supports of false religion gradually strengthened itself in the Christian world.”*

* Milner.

authorities, considered the first example of a regular monastic life. His retreat was about 305; soon after which monks began to associate. Athanasius introduced the monastic life into Rome in 341.

As early as the second century notions were entertained of the sanctity of a state of celibacy. No doubt, in very many instances, the persecuted state of the Christians rendered it a matter of expediency,* and, perhaps, even of duty, to maintain self-denial in this respect. The error consisted in supposing a state of celibacy to be in itself more holy and more acceptable to God than a state of matrimony; and in either maintaining or enforcing it when inclinations and circumstances suggested a different course. When first the practice began to prevail, or rather to come into high repute, the wisest and best of the Christian teachers, following the apostles, laboured to control and repel the unscriptural† innovation. Dionysius,‡ bishop of Corinth, wrote to this effect. Clement of Alexandria calls it a heresy. The bishops assembled at the council of Gangia, when heretical and heathenish sentiments depreciating matrimony had begun to spread among the people, and to be adopted by some of the clergy, declared that they honoured the chaste bond of wedlock. At the council of Nice, held about the same time, Chrysostom, Theophylact, and others, maintained, in strong terms, that “wedlock was in no respect whatsoever obstructive of virtue.”§ However, the error

* Matt. xxiv. 19; 1 Cor. vii. 26.

† 1 Tim. iii. 2, 12; iv. 3; v. 14; Tit. i. 6; ii. 4, 5.

‡ Euseb. p. 71, book iv. ch. xxii.

§ See Elliott, Delineation, p. 716.

once introduced spread rapidly, and like many other profane and vain babblings, increased unto more ungodliness.*

Among the early superstitions which crept into the Christian church, the use of "holy water" in churches has been generally assigned to the year 120, but on very questionable authority. It is hard to conjecture for what purpose it could be used ; and it seems most unlikely that that heathen custom should be so early adopted, when we well know that, at a later period, the Christians had such an invincible horror of the superstition, which they linked together with the heathen incense, that their bitter enemy, Julian,† caused holy water to be sprinkled over the meat and other food in the market, expressly that the Christians might be compelled to take it against their consciences, or to starve. True it is, that in course of time it became a custom to "bless" the water used for baptism, by putting into it a lighted torch, and mixing with it oil and chrism, this ceremony to be performed on the eve ‡ of the feast of Easter, and that of Pentecost ; and not at other times, except on special occasions. This "blessed water" is also used for sprinkling on persons entering the door of a Roman Catholic chapel, and a vast variety of other occasions, but the tradition of its being used by the Christians in the year 120 certainly seems unfounded.

In closing this sketch of the progress of superstition during the first ages of Christianity, the reader is requested to bear in mind that they are

* 2 Tim. ii. 16.

† Gibbon.

‡ Elliott, Delineation, p. 124.

not, strictly speaking, the practices of the church of Rome. In point of locality, some had their origin in Greece, some in Egypt, or other parts of Africa, and certainly some in Italy; but, for the first two centuries, the churches of Rome were nothing more than the churches of Jerusalem or Samaria. It was in the third century, that certain churches, as being central in extensive districts, were termed metropolitan, particularly the churches of Rome,* Antioch, Alexandria, and Carthage. Of these, Rome was acknowledged as first in order, but nothing more.

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 194.

CHAPTER VII.

OUTWARD PROSPERITY.

DURING the three centuries of opposition and persecution the Christians multiplied exceedingly, like Israel of old when oppressed by the Egyptians.* The faith and constancy of the martyrs, in many instances, wrought conviction of the truth and excellence of the principles for which they suffered, and were made the means of inducing others to come forward and be "baptized for the dead." Besides this, when intervals of tranquillity occurred, and a profession of Christianity could be taken up without immediate and formidable sacrifice, many persons made that profession from inferior motives, and apparently without any deep experience of the power of religion on their souls. However, thus the numbers were swelled, and the rulers of the Christian church were courted and honoured by the rulers and governors of provinces.

The Roman emperors, generally speaking, had been hostile to the Christians. But Constantine, who became emperor in 306, shortly afterwards

* Exod. i.

declared himself a Christian. "Whether he really loved the gospel and felt its influence on his own heart is a doubtful question. But that he believed it Divinely true we need not hesitate to affirm." Whether policy or conviction had most to do in inducing him to avow himself a disciple of the despised Nazarene, it is not easy or necessary to decide. Certain it is, that he encouraged Christian worship, and patronized Christian ministers. In the early part of his reign he allowed both Christians and pagans the free exercise of their religion: but afterwards he proceeded much further. He erected splendid temples for Christian worship, bearing a striking resemblance, both in their external and internal appearance, to those of the pagans. Those temples, many of which were built over the tombs of the martyrs, and dedicated to their memory, he adorned with pictures and images. He caused medals to be dispersed throughout the provinces, on which he was represented in a humble and suppliant posture of Christian devotion. He prohibited the worship of idols, and assigned to the Christian ministers the honours and authority of the deposed pagan priests. He convened councils or synods of the bishops to settle controversial disputes, and arrange other affairs of the churches. At some of these councils the emperor was present, and enforced compliance with their decisions. "On the bishops of the predominant sect he lavished his imperial treasure, and against their heretical opponents he exercised his power, by banishing their leaders, forbidding their assemblies, and burning their books. Worldly men now coveted and obtained the highest offices

in the Christian church, and regulated its doctrine and its worship by worldly principles. Every possible expedient was adopted to impart to it an air of grandeur. To make Christianity more palatable to pagan neighbours, many of their customs were borrowed and observed as Christian rites. Judaism, too, having much in it adapted to dazzle the imagination, many Levitical institutions were incorporated with the simple religion of Jesus. The public prayers degenerated into swelling bombast ; the sermons were studded with vain embellishments to attract admiration ; festivals and commemorations of the martyrs were multiplied ; magnificent vestments were worn by the ministers ; costly vessels were used in the service ; mitres, tiaras, crosiers, wax tapers, processions, and lustrations contributed to the pomp ; and loud congratulations on the prosperity of the church every where abounded, which were scarcely interrupted by the whispers of the few, who said that formerly they had golden priests and wooden cups, but now they had golden cups and wooden priests !”

Constantine, on his first accession, governed only the Western part of the empire. Licinius, who married the sister of Constantine, was emperor of the East. The two emperors joined in the first edict which granted liberty of conscience to all their subjects. But the friendly alliance which then subsisted between them was soon interrupted, and several wars ensued. The result was that Licinius was defeated and killed, and Constantine became sole emperor. One of the first acts of the victorious monarch was to found a new metropolis, which was to bear his own

name, and to be a perpetual monument of the glories of his reign—the ancient city of Byzantium, in Thrace, now Constantinople. Constantine himself resided there, and a large proportion of the Roman senators. It soon disputed with Rome itself the pre-eminence of riches and numbers. It became the seat of government, and was dignified by its founder with the name of New Rome, or Second Rome.

“The Revolution* effected by Constantine,” says a modern author, “inasmuch as it led to a change of the seat of empire, may be considered as having eclipsed, if not extinguished, the sun of Rome; and it was this removal of the imperial throne from the capital of the pagan Cæsars which, more directly than any other circumstance, opened the way for the subsequent usurpation of the Roman pontiffs, agreeably to the apostolic prediction respecting ‘the man of sin.’” “The portentous event which was interposed between the apostolic age and the day of Christ was THE APOSTASY and the manifestation of the man of sin,† the son of perdition, whose coming was to be after the working of Satan. But something stood in the way of that event, and prevented the development of the mystery of iniquity.” “It is an opinion of very early date,‡ that the pagan Roman empire was referred to by St. Paul in this expression; and if so, there were obvious reasons for his not being more

* Conder, “Harmony of History with Prophecy,” pp. 113, 76, 77. † 2 Thess. ii. 3—12.

‡ References to Tertullian, Comment; Chrysostom, Homily; Jerome, &c.

explicit. The Roman civil power operated as a restraint upon the corrupt tendencies already at work in the Christian church, both by the direct persecutions, which checked the growth of dissensions and heresies, and which were recognised by the pious as the just and merciful chastisements of Heaven ; and by precluding that incorporation of political and spiritual power which subsequently changed the whole frame of Christianity. So general was the belief among the primitive Christians, that what hindered the 'man of sin' was the Roman empire, that they prayed for its peace and welfare, as knowing that when that empire should be dissolved antichrist would be revealed."

All the acts of Constantine, however well meant, had a direct tendency to secularize the church. It is possible that he really intended to benefit Christianity by enriching and ennobling it, and did not foresee the evil that would ensue, though to the truly spiritually minded Christians the danger was very evident. Even the just and honourable testimony to the innocence and worth of the martyrs and confessors of Christianity, which restored the living to their standing in society, the possession of their goods, and the enjoyment of every civic honour and privilege, and which restored the confiscated property of the departed to their surviving relatives, *or to the church*, was likely to encourage the ecclesiastical rapacity of which contemporary writers so bitterly complain. Still more palpable was the mischief inevitably resulting from the adoption of heathen embellishments and Jewish rites. "Heathenism

had indeed now joined with Judaism by its idolatry, as before by its philosophy, in corrupting the Christianity that had overthrown it. Alike the infidel Gibbon and the Christian bishop Van Mildert, speak of heathenism as revived in the empire. To use the words of Coleridge, "the pastors of the church had gradually changed the life and light of the gospel, into the very superstitions they were commissioned to disperse, and thus paganized Christianity in order to christen Paganism." "If," says another learned and elegant writer, "the philosophy and vain deceit of Paganism were injurious to the simplicity which is in Christ, still more fatally infectious were the seductions of its gay ritual and imaginative mythology. With these elements of corruption Christianity was every where surrounded. The genius of heathenism was incessantly at work to convert the religion of the Saviour into its own likeness. If an apostle had revisited the earth at the end of four or five centuries from the period of his ministry, and had looked at nothing but the outward and visible form of the Christian church, he might have been tempted to fear that the truth for which he had laboured and bled, had been wholly transformed into a gorgeous spectacle, a sort of mystic pageantry; its painful and laborious evangelists into pompous actors; its places of worship into splendid theatres. All testimony combines to show that the genius of Paganism, despairing of an open conflict against the imperial faith, was spreading its own fantastic embroidery over the simple and seamless vesture of Christianity; and not only so, but was

beginning to mix up its palatable venom with her sacred and living waters.”*

On the death of Constantine, the empire was again divided between his three sons, all of whom professed Christianity. The eldest, Constantine II., was slain by his brother Constans, who himself was killed in Spain. The third, Constantius II., then reigned alone. After him Julian (commonly called the apostate) reigned. Then for a short time heathenism revived, and Christianity was again opposed and in some degree persecuted. In less than two years Julian was slain in Persia. Again the Christians had rest from persecution. Jovian, who succeeded Julian, was a Christian and a peaceful man, but his reign was short, and his death sudden. After him Valentinian reigned in the west, and his brother Valens in the east. Valens perished in battle in the year 378. He was succeeded by Theodosius (the Great). After the death of Valentinian, Eugenius usurped the empire of the west, who again encouraged the pagans. But their hopes were of short duration. Theodosius dethroned the usurper and became sole emperor. His reign “is at once the era of the destruction of Paganism, and of that corruption of Christianity which so speedily followed upon the establishment of its political supremacy.”† “Woe to you !” said our Lord, “when all men shall speak well of you!”‡ and woe to the church when a profession of religion, and especially the sacred office of a Christian teacher, is made the high road to

* Le Bas, *Life of Wickliffe*, pp. 6, 10.

† Conder, *Harmony*, p. 138.

‡ Luke vi. 26.

worldly emolument and honour. Rather let "the disciple be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord."* Rather let all the world frown on the Christian, if his Master smile, than that he should be lured by ambition, pride, or luxury, to cherish that "friendship of the world which is enmity with God."†

* Matt. x. 25.

† James iv. 4.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHURCH OF ROME—ITS ORIGIN—APOSTOLICAL
SUCCESSION—TRADITION.

THE very best thing we know of the church of Rome is what the apostle Paul mentions in his letter to the first Christians in that imperial city. He addresses them as “the called of Jesus Christ—beloved of God; called to be saints.” He thanks God through Jesus Christ for them all, that their faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. From all he had heard and known of them, he felt a strong Christian affection and high esteem for them, and for many years had desired to visit them; he prayed fervently for them, desired to be affectionately remembered to many of them in particular, and expressed his persuasion of them generally, that they were full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another.* Oh, if the church of Rome at the present day answered the apostle’s description, how gladly would her pastors, her missionaries, or her messengers be welcomed as brethren by the Christians in Britain! How should we hope that they would come to us in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, that they would be enabled to

* Rom. i. 6, 7, 9; xv. 23, 14; xvi.

impart to us some spiritual gift, to the end that we might be established and refreshed and comforted by the mutual faith both of them and us ; and how should we strive together in our prayers to God, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that the gospel on which we mutually depend should be published for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name !* But alas ! times are sadly changed since the apostle's days.

Of the early pastors of the Roman church we have no particular account in Scripture. Ancient historians tell us that some good men mentioned in the Epistles of the apostle Paul were among the early bishops, particularly Clement† and Linus.‡ Later writers of the Romish church give a complete list of the bishops, of whom Sylvester (the bishop who flourished when the emperor Constantine took the Christian cause under his protection) is the thirty-fifth in succession. There may have been such persons, or there may not ; but as the very first name on the list appears with a statement which is manifestly untrue, we do not feel disposed to search much after the others. The apostle Peter, we are told, was the first bishop of Rome ; some give him twenty-four years for his episcopate, some thirty-three, neither of which can be true. It was not the office of the apostles to become settled bishops over one particular church. They went from place to place to preach the gospel and found churches. Then “they ordained them elders in every city”§ or place, of the most pious, judicious, and established

* Rom. xv. 29 ; i. 11, 12 ; xv. 30 ; i. 5 ; xvi. 26.

† Phil. iv. 3. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 21. § Acts xiv. 23.

of the converts, and proceeded to other places. In some instances they stayed longer at particular places, when circumstances required their presence; but still they were there as apostles, not as bishops, except as the greater office included the lesser. It was well understood that the apostles were but transient residents waiting the signal for departure to some other sphere of labour. If they stayed long, they committed the charge of the church to its own elders, and left all in order; if they were hurried away, they left or sent evangelists to settle what was left unfinished.*

As to the apostle Peter, we can trace his history for a great part of the time that the historians above referred to would have us believe he was in Rome. We know from Scripture that he was in Jerusalem, Judæa generally, Samaria, Lydda, Joppa, Cæsarea,† and other parts far distant from Rome. We know that at least fourteen years after the commencement of his apostolical labours he went from Jerusalem to Antioch.‡ His Epistles are addressed to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,§ where he had apparently laboured; indeed we know that his vocation was chiefly among the Jews. We do not know from Scripture that he ever was in Rome at all. It is very unlikely that he was resident there when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, or his name surely would have been mentioned among the particular salutations.||

* Acts xvi. 40; xviii. 20—23; xix. 10; xx. 17—35; 1 Tim. i. 3; iii. 14, 15; Titus i. 5.

† Acts ii., iii., iv., v., viii. 14; ix. 32—43; x., xi., xii., xv. 7.

‡ Gal. ii. 11.

§ 1 Pet. i. 1.

|| Rom. xvi.

When Paul arrived in Rome as a prisoner he collected the Jews together to give them information about Judæa, and the Christian religion, which, if Peter had been long resident there, they would have possessed already. When he wrote his prison Epistles—those to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon ; and, at a later period, near the time of his death, the Second to Timothy—when in some of those Epistles he joined the name of Timothy with his own in the superscription—when he spoke with affection and gratitude of those kind friends in Rome who had been a comfort to him—when he concluded with salutations from friends in Rome, mentioning them by name—surely, in some of these connexions, we should have heard something of Peter, if he had been resident in the city. But not once, either in the narrative of Paul's imprisonment, or in his Epistles written from Rome, is the name of Peter mentioned.* Ancient historians tell us that Peter was crucified at Rome nearly at the same time that Paul was beheaded. The probability seems to be that both those apostles had recently come to Rome, when their zeal in preaching the gospel exposed them to the persecuting rage of Nero. At all events it is fabulous and false to say that the church at Rome was founded either by Peter, or Paul, or by both conjointly. Yet this is the great boast of the Romish church, her unbroken chain of apostolical succession. But remove the first link, and what becomes of the chain? However, we will not contend that point

* See Acts xxviii. 17—22; Eph. vi. 21; Phil. i. 1; iv. 21, 22; Col. i. 1; iv. 7—14; Philem. 23, 24; 2 Tim. iv. 10, 11, 21.

with them ; whoever it might be that first preached the gospel, and first gathered a Christian church in Rome, that church was undoubtedly “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone ;” * and if the doctrine and spirit of Christ and his apostles had been continually maintained to the present day, the church would still be a truly Christian church, and could indeed trace its true apostolical succession.

But in all this there is nothing to distinguish the church of Rome from any other Christian church, and for centuries the church of Rome claimed no distinction. It was then a part of the Catholic church of Christ. But it has now for many centuries claimed to be *the* Catholic church, and assumed that every other Christian community and Christian individual in the world is a part of *it*, or else that they are heretics. Now this is a very formidable assumption, and one to which we ought not to be indifferent. It behoves us to look well to our foundations, to try whether we have good and sufficient reasons for holding ourselves independent of the church of Rome, or whether the church of Rome has any just right or good reason for claiming authority over us.

Religion has been spoken of as that which binds the soul to God ; † and God has been pleased to give us his own holy book to teach us how he would have us draw near to him. When, then, any thing is pressed upon us as a religious duty, our first inquiry ought to be, “What does the Book say about it ? Where is it enjoined in the Book ?

* Eph. ii. 20.

† Chap. i. p. 4.

To the law and to the testimony ; for if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”* Well, what does the Bible say about our owing obedience to the church or the pope of Rome? Not one word from Genesis to Revelation. How, then, can it be right? A priest of the Romish church would answer, “The Scriptures are a rule, and an inspired rule, but they are not the only rule. We have traditions handed down to us from the times of the apostles, which are of equal authority with the written word, and which are necessary to a complete exhibition of the religion of Jesus Christ. Besides that, the church is constituted by Christ the living expositor and interpreter of Scripture, and the authorized judge of all opinions and practices.”

And what has an unlearned, common-sense Christian to say in reply to this? Why, first it may occur to his mind that the Scriptures are expressly given him to be a light to his feet and a lamp to his path ; that in them are given the words of eternal life. He is told to “search the Scriptures ;” to let them dwell in him richly in all wisdom ; and that, if he lack wisdom to understand them, he may ask it of God, who gives to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, † however dull their capacities of learning, and however often they may have to apply. Putting these things together, he cannot suppose that God has given an incomplete or insufficient rule, and not given the inquirer any directions where to apply for further information. He may, perhaps, recollect, that only a part

* Isa. viii. 20.

† Psal. cxix. 105 ; John v. 39 ; Col. iii. 16 ; James i. 5.

of revelation was given in the Old Testament, and that there were a great many promises of clearer and fuller teaching at a future day;* which promises those who received the Scriptures fully expected should be fulfilled when the Messiah should come;† and that, when the Messiah did come, a voice spake from the excellent glory, “This is my beloved Son; hear ye him.”‡ The apostle Peter, referring to this, testified his certainty that they had not followed cunningly devised fables, and grounded his certainty not only upon the voice he heard, but upon the “more sure word of prophecy,” with which it was in harmony. The voice was heard by only three persons; and it was only heard for a brief space of time; but it confirmed the written word, which every body might read, and examine in all ages of time. It might be remembered, too, that when the angel was sent to Cornelius, he told him some things very encouraging, but he did not tell him all that it was necessary for him to know; yet neither did he leave him in doubt and perplexity. He gave him full directions where to apply.§ Now there is nothing in the New Testament to lead us to expect any further revelation; indeed, the book closes with a solemn declaration, that it is complete, and that nothing must be added to or taken away from it. || “It is complete,” may the humble Christian answer, who lives and walks in its light. “It tells me all that I need to know. I never search it in vain for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruc-

* Isa. ii. 3; liv. 13; xi. 9, &c.

† John iv. 25.

‡ Matt. xvii. 5; 2 Pet. i. 16—19.

§ Acts x. 4—6, 31, 32; xi. 13, 14.

|| Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

tion in righteousness, for consolation in sorrow, for guidance in perplexity; all that I need I find here. My Saviour promised his Holy Spirit to lead the apostles into all truth, that they might teach it to others; and he fulfilled his promise. It is seen even in this, that they were led to recollect and put in writing all that it was needful for us to know, that we might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing, we might have life through his name;* and that they were restrained from writing more, lest the book should be so large that the poor could not obtain it, nor the busy read it, nor the unlearned understand it. 'Precious Bible! what a treasure!' 'The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants.' If tradition tells me no more than the Bible, it must be needless. If it does pretend to tell more, it must be untrue and dangerous; and unless the Bible had commanded me to give heed to it, and had told me where infallible tradition was to be found, I may safely stick to my Bible, and let tradition alone."

But the Romish priest would tell you that you are commanded in the Bible to "stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle,"† and that those are blamed who do not observe the traditions. The quotation of these passages has sometimes startled and stumbled the simple. But let them be looked at with care, and all difficulty vanishes. While the apostles lived, what they spoke by word of mouth had equal authority with what they wrote. They could answer questions, and send

* John xx. 30, 31.

† 2 Thess. ii. 15; iii. 6.

messages, and their word was every way worthy to be believed and obeyed. But how should we, at this distance of time, know any thing of their traditions, except as they were written for our benefit? Who does not know, in the common affairs of life, what mistakes and mischief are perpetually occurring from a message or report passing through only two or three channels, and becoming entirely altered from its original purport; and this without any wilful intention to deceive? And knowing this, who could dare to venture the salvation of his soul, and his obedience to Christ, on a word not written in the Bible, but which has professedly been handed down from one to another for eighteen hundred years? It may be safely affirmed that if, in all the traditions of the church of Rome, there is one precept worth observing, that precept may be found in the Bible more clearly expressed, and with an incomparably higher sanction and authority.

Another question may strike a plain, thoughtful inquirer—"But suppose the apostles did leave certain oral traditions, and command them to be handed down to all generations, how came the church of Rome to be in possession of them all? and in what manner have they been preserved? The church of Rome was not the only church that the apostles left on earth." Certainly not; nor had it any sort of pre-eminency over other churches. The apostles, doubtless, said and did very many things that are not written in the New Testament. These would be recollected with affectionate veneration by one friend and another; they would form matter of conversation in their

families and in their social meetings, and they would be handed down from father to son, just as we receive and preserve the memory of noble sayings and worthy actions of great and good men, especially if they were our own ancestors; and very interesting and instructive this kind of tradition is. We have a very few such of the apostles and their friends; that, for instance, of the apostle John, who, when he was so old and feeble as to be unable to deliver a long discourse, would be carried to the place where the Christians assembled, and say to them, "Little children, love one another." Why do we believe and repeat this traditionary anecdote? Not because the church of Rome says it is true, and is to be believed, but because it fully agrees with the spirit of the Bible* generally, and with the writings of the apostle John† in particular, and is in itself instructive and good. But if instead of enforcing and exemplifying or acknowledging Scripture duty, this traditionary anecdote had told us of some new doctrine to be believed, or some new practice to be observed, and required us to receive it on the testimony of the apostle John, we might justly say, "No: what is written is certain and fixed, and to that I must adhere. There may have been some mistake or wilful corruption in the transmission of this traditionary record. I know that a prophet of old erred and suffered for yielding to the persuasion of one who professed to bring him a message from God, which was at variance with

* John xiii. 34, 35; Rom. xiii. 10; 1 Cor. xiii.; Gal. v. 14; Eph. v. 1, 2.

† 1 John iii. 18; iv. 11, 21.

an express command that he had previously received on *certain* authority.* I know that Satan may transform himself into an angel of light.† The church of Ephesus is commended for having “tried them which say they are apostles, and are not.”‡ The apostle Paul has told us how to receive himself or an angel from heaven § that should preach any other gospel; and I dare not make void the law of God by receiving this tradition.|| Thus we may safely try tradition by Scripture, but not Scripture by tradition. Whoever might possess any traditions of the apostles, they had just so much authority as they received from Scripture, and no more.

“Before the publication of the Gospels, these things (the great truths of the gospel) were all communicated by word of mouth, but it was by the mouth of inspired men. They ceased to speak, one by one, as their Master called them to rest from their labours; but they were not all removed till they had committed to writing the things which they had so long declared by the living voice. These are what we have in the New Testament; having which, we have their word as really as those who heard them speak; and all the traditions which are of permanent use and universal obligation among Christians: and we may defy the church of Rome to adduce a single article of doctrine or ordinance of worship which she has derived from oral tradition, that is not contrary to or inconsistent with some part of the written word, and therefore it cannot be of God. For it

* 1 Kings xiii.

† 2 Cor. xi. 14.

‡ Rev. ii. 2.

§ Gal. i. 8, 9.

|| Matt. xv.

is the height of impiety and blasphemy to say that he commanded his servants to teach one thing with their pens, and a contrary thing with their mouths." *

But, to return to unwritten traditions in the early days of the church—Many of the disciples and friends of the apostles would recollect and repeat some fact or observation which particularly struck the mind of the narrator, from its congeniality with his own views, or from its adaptation to his own particular circumstances, or state of feeling; another would recollect something of an opposite cast, but equally true and applicable to other circumstances. Perhaps two eye or ear-witnesses might attach a different meaning to the same fact or sentiment. Each would, according to the common principles of human nature, cling tenaciously to his own recollection, or his own judgment, deem it most illustrative of the character and sentiments of his favourite apostle, and more or less claim for it to be received as apostolical authority.

If two or three intimate friends of some distinguished individual set about to write his life,† all the records will be different, and, in some instances, contradictory; and though, perhaps, all might be harmonized, it is much more likely that a disputatious spirit will be engendered. Each writer will almost claim infallibility for himself, and almost charge the rival author with falsehood, or at least with want of judgment and discrimination. A spirit very much like this may be traced in some of the traditionary quotations even of the early

* M'Gavin on "The End of Controversy," p. 120.

† As in the case of Dr. Johnson.

Christian writers. The apostles are often brought in as parties to a cause, not as simple witnesses to the truth. However, at that time there was no attempt to represent that the church of Rome had any special property in apostolical traditions, or that the apostles had invested Rome with any sort of supremacy. It belonged to a much later day to find out or invent certain decretals, by which the apostles are represented as the authors and founders of all the arbitrary and corrupt practices of the church of Rome which prevailed over the world in what are emphatically called "the dark ages," and which, in this enlightened age, it is attempted again to revive and establish.

CHAPTER IX.

CHURCH OF ROME CONTINUED—SUPREMACY.

LONDON is the metropolis of England, the seat of government, the centre of laws, commerce, social intelligence, polished society, and fashion. It draws together visitors from all parts of the empire, indeed from all parts of the world. In distant provinces and obscure villages, the inhabitant who frequently visits London is supposed to know much more of society and manners than his rustic neighbours. On many questions he is appealed to as an authority; a kind of superiority is voluntarily conceded to him, and sometimes assumed by him. In former days, when travelling was much more difficult and hazardous than at present, and when a journey to the metropolis was almost the event of a man's life, the distinction was proportionably more marked.

When Christianity was first published, Rome was the metropolis of the civilized world—the seat of universal government. All the south of Europe, and a great part of Asia and of Africa, were subjected to the dominion of Rome, and were termed provinces of the Roman empire. Widely different and essentially distinct as religion is from all worldly things, the bishops of Rome,

from the mere fact of their being stationed in the chief city, gradually acquired a sort of metropolitan influence, and assumed a tone of authority. "The Papacy," it has been justly observed, "commenced from the smallest, and advanced to the highest degree of influence and power that ever man possessed." There is a voluntary deference paid to eminent talent, of whatever kind, whether of wealth, honour, reputation, place, order of dignity, or intercourse with persons of high rank. To those who possess any or all of these advantages, the management of affairs is often voluntarily conceded, and from custom has arisen the claim of right. "Men will not be content with mere eminence; they desire real power and influence in order to obtain command over others." "The natural tendency of power is extension. It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, indeed, is the smallest of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs. Encroachment (says Plutarch) is an innate disease of power. It is bold and enterprising, and any pretence will serve as a foundation for its claims. Every additional accession produces further aggrandizement. Thus many absolute kingdoms have grown. The first chief was a leader of volunteers; who afterwards became a prince with stated privileges; then a monarch invested with prerogatives; and, finally, a Grand Seignior, usurping absolute dominion." "Spiritual power has a similar tendency to growth and establishment;" and in this way we may trace the beginning, ascendancy, and advancing encroachments of the power of Rome. We may perceive the early workings of pride,

ambition, and other corrupt principles ; but certainly, for more than three centuries after the apostolic age, supremacy was neither claimed nor conceded. If the Roman bishops sometimes assumed a tone of authority, and attempted to encroach on the privileges of their brethren, they were promptly and stoutly repulsed. For instance, Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, in the middle of the third century, boldly resisted the endeavours of Stephen, the Roman bishop, to compel other churches to adopt his opinions and follow his practice. The matter in dispute was, whether baptism conferred by heretics was valid, or whether persons so baptized, on joining an orthodox church, should be baptized again ; but, be the dispute what it might, the fact is the same, that whatever the bishop and church of Rome might believe and practise, other bishops and churches maintained the right of judging for themselves.

When the emperor of Rome professed Christianity, and richly endowed Christian communities and bishops, a great step was taken towards the establishing the supremacy of those in the metropolis. After the famous council of Nice in 324, held by the command and in the presence of the emperor Constantine, with the design of suppressing heresies and promoting uniformity, another council was held in Rome to confirm that of Nice. At this council there were present two hundred and seventy-five bishops of the western churches. Sylvester, bishop of Rome, presided, and in the following terms ratified the decrees of Nice : “ We confirm with our mouth that which has been decreed at Nice, a city of Bithynia, by the three

hundred and eighteen holy bishops, for the good of the Catholic and apostolic church, and mother of the faithful. We anathematize all those who shall dare to contradict the decrees of the great and holy council which was assembled at Nice, in the presence of that most pious and venerable prince, the emperor Constantine :” and to this all the bishops answered, “ We consent to it.” One cannot but be struck with the difference of tone and language employed from those of the Christian conference and apostolical decision at Jerusalem,* of which the excellent Thomas Scott observes, “ This has commonly been called the first general council ; and it seems to have also been the last where it could properly be said, It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.” It is evident that the further the pastors of the church were removed from sacred inspiration, the more the spirit of domination increased. The spirit of persecution was not far behind ; indeed its essence is found in the anathema of Sylvester. In less than a century, one of his successors, named Innocent, is mentioned by the historian Socrates with this dishonourable distinction affixed to his name, “ Innocentius, who first drove the Novatians out of Rome, and deprived them of many churches.” Another successor, Celestine, whose date was from 422 to 432, “ banished the Novatians out of Rome, deprived them of their churches, and constrained Rusticula, their bishop, privily to raise private conventicles. For unto that time the Novatians flourished at Rome, enjoyed many churches, and had under them great congregations. But they

* Acts xv.

were then hated out of measure, when as the bishop of Rome (no otherwise than the bishop of Alexandria) passing the bounds of his priestly order, presumed to challenge unto himself secular power and authority. Therefore those bishops permitted not those who held the faith of one substance* freely to frequent their wonted assemblies; and, although they commended them for their uniform consent as touching the faith, yet they deprived them of their substance.”†

The following is perhaps as correct and comprehensive an account of the establishment of papal authority as can be given in an equal space. It is extracted from Cramp’s Text Book of Popery.

“Under the Christian emperors, as they are termed, religion enjoyed outward prosperity. But it was purchased at too dear a rate. For wealth, honour, and power, the church bartered away the little spirituality she still possessed, and lost her independence into the bargain. As human inventions gained credit, the authority of the ecclesiastics who introduced and patronised them increased. Frequent councils were summoned to allay contention or impose conformity. By all such events the bishops of Rome profited. Presiding over one of the largest churches in the empire, and that church in the metropolis, they soon perceived the advantage thus accidentally bestowed upon them, and skilfully availed themselves of every opportunity to improve it. Other bishops frequently applied to them for advice;

* A theological distinction disputed upon in the council of Nice.

† Socrates, Eccles. Hist. book vii. chap. xii.

this was construed as an appeal to a higher power. Synods transmitted to them their decrees, as it was then customary to do from district to district, for the sake of information, and to secure some approach to uniformity of government. This was interpreted as a request for the *confirmation** of those decrees. It became a common thing to refer disputes between bishops or churches to the arbitration of the Roman bishop, and such cases were often sent to them by the emperors, who exercised a superintending control over the church, as their predecessors had done over pagan worship. To these considerations must be added the fact, that those churches which could trace their foundation to an apostle, claimed on that account peculiar respect ; and as the opinion began pretty generally to prevail in the third century, that the church of Rome was founded and governed by Peter, the bishops of that city were not slow to put forward on all occasions the most arrogant pretensions, and to assume absolute lordship. They were indeed stoutly resisted by many other bishops, and for a long time they were obliged to confess the general equality of Christian pastors. But their influence steadily increased ; one district after another was brought under their superintendence ; and at length the emperor Valentinian III. passed a decree, (A. D. 445,) constituting the Roman bishop head of the whole western church. Six years afterwards the council of Chalcedon declared the bishops of Constantinople and Rome to be equal in power, each being the bishop of a metropolis ; and

* See account of the council at Rome, p. 101.

to the former the same deference was for some time paid in the east, as was shown to the latter in the west.

The removal of the seat of empire from Rome to Constantinople, tended greatly to increase the power and influence of the bishops of the former city. Their wealth and the growing authority they exercised (the bulk of the population being now nominally Christian) gave them political importance, and constituted them the natural protectors of the city. The absence of the emperor, too, enabled the prelates to perfect their schemes of dominion, and consolidate their power without fear of interference. The dismemberment of the empire by the irruptions of the barbarians was also peculiarly favourable to their views, as it left them at liberty to complete the aggrandizement of their see, and erect an independent administration. Those ignorant and superstitious hordes successively embraced the profession of Christianity, transferring to the clergy the reverence with which they had been accustomed to regard their priests, and looking upon the head of the church as little less than a god upon earth. To retain them in their spiritual obedience, it was deemed necessary to stoop to their prejudices. Christianity received further additions from pagan rites. The religion of the converted barbarians was only changed in form, the substance remained the same—a compound of folly and imposture.” We interrupt this quotation to introduce another :

“The Roman bishop, Gregory the Great, (A. D. 590,) ‘the man of the age,’ was firmly persuaded that the Roman empire was hastening to ruin,

that antichrist was at hand, and that the end of the world must be near ; regarding, as its preliminaries, so many invasions of barbarians, so many wars and public calamities, with which this age was afflicted ; and he repeats nothing more often in all his discourses and his letters, than the coming of the Judge, and the severity of his judgment. It is most strange and remarkable that, in his violent contest with the Byzantine patriarch for Catholic supremacy, Gregory, who has been styled the first pope and the last Roman bishop, declared before Christendom that, *whosoever styled himself, or sought to be called, universal bishop, or universal priest, was, in his pride of heart, the precursor of antichrist* ; that the tendency of this assumption, if acceded to, was to withdraw all members of the church from its only true Head, Christ Jesus, in order to attach them to himself ; and that, as to the Greek patriarchs having so acted, it surprised him not ; he saw in the fact only a fulfilment of prophecy, and recognised it as a sign that antichrist was at hand.” “ In his rival the patriarch of Constantinople, he condemned the anti-christian title of universal bishop, which the successor of St. Peter was too haughty to concede, and too feeble to assume ; and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Gregory was confined to the triple character, of bishop of Rome, primate of Italy, and apostle of the west.”

“ Yet, within ten or fifteen years, this very title was assumed by Boniface, Gregory’s successor in the pontificate ; the Greek emperor Phocas himself conferring it (A. D. 606) upon the Latin primate.”

To resume the Text Book of Popery:—"In 606, Phocas, emperor of Constantinople, is said to have granted to Boniface III., then bishop of Rome, the title of 'Universal Bishop.' Be that as it may, it is well known that from this time the Popes (as they were called, the term "Papa," that is, "father," hitherto common to all bishops, being now exclusively appropriated to them) resolutely maintained their claim to ecclesiastical supremacy, as successors to Peter and vicars of Christ. The growing weakness of the imperial power in Italy served to strengthen and extend their usurpations. In the eighth century, (A. D. 755,) Pepin, king of France, who had sought and obtained pope Zachary's sanction of the dethronement of Childeric his predecessor, rewarded the Roman see for the boon, by conquering the exarchate of Ravenna from the Lombards, and bestowing it on Stephen II., the then reigning pontiff. Thus the pope became a secular prince, governing the patrimony of St. Peter, as the exarchate was designated, adding to his dominions from time to time, as he was able, and taking his place among the sovereigns of Europe.

"From this time the papal tyranny was firmly established. The Roman pontiffs had attained the height of their greatness; sustaining their pretensions by forged decretals of ancient times, and practising on the fears of a dark and superstitious age, they strove to set up an universal monarchy, and to exact homage from all temporal sovereigns. Crowns were said to be in their gift. Kings might not assume their own titles without permission from Rome; and they forfeited them if they offended

their lordly masters. Resistance was punished by excommunication or interdict—harmless weapons in the hands of ordinary men, but destructive as Heaven's lightning when hurled by a Gregory, an Innocent, or a Boniface. The mind of Europe was prostrated at the foot of a priest. The stoutest hearts quailed at his frown. Seated on the throne of blasphemy, he 'spake great words against the Most High,' and 'thought to change times and laws,' Dan. vii. 25. Many hated him, but all stood in dread of his power. Like Simon Magus, he 'bewitched the people with his sorceries, giving out that he was some great one,' Acts viii. 9. Like Nebuchadnezzar, 'all people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down,'" Dan. v. 19.*

Thus the papal *power* was established; but Christians would naturally ask where was the Scriptural *right*. And this question was asked again and again, especially at the first encroachments, when there were more Christians familiar with the Holy Scriptures than at a later period. When Popery prevailed, Bible-reading was very rare, as we shall have occasion hereafter to remark; but at first Christians were familiar with the words of Christ, and his apostles and evangelists, and would not be easily satisfied without a firm Scriptural basis on which to rest their faith, and by which to regulate their practice. A few passages of Scripture were therefore adduced, on which it

* Cramp's Text Book of Popery, pp. 404, 405.

was argued that Peter was the prince of the apostles, that Jesus Christ had given him the keys of the church, and had, in an especial manner, charged him to feed his flock. Well, let all that is true be admitted. Peter is generally named first of the apostles ;* perhaps he was the eldest among them (there is reason to think he was older than John).† Perhaps he was the first called. He certainly was an early believer in Christ.‡ He was one of the three whom Jesus distinguished with especial marks of his friendship, and admitted to the closest intimacy. When these three are mentioned, Peter is named first.§ Peter was warm-hearted, zealous, and ardent. He was generally spokesman for the rest of the apostles, and in their name and his own said many excellent things ; in particular, he uttered that noble confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God ;”|| and that stedfast decision for Christ, when many forsook him, and Jesus asked the twelve, Will ye also go away ? “Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”¶

As Peter was the chief speaker, so the answers of Jesus were particularly addressed to him—that answer especially on which Papists build so much —“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build

* Matt. x. 2 ; Mark iii. 16 ; Luke vi. 14.

† John xx. 4.

‡ John i. 42 ; Luke v. 3.

§ Matt. xvii. 1 ; xxvi. 37 ; Mark v. 37 ; ix. 2 ; xiv. 33 ; Luke viii. 51 ; ix. 28.

|| Matt. xvi. 16.

¶ John vi. 68.

my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.”*

The first of these three verses evidently refers to his personal experience as a believer in Christ. “Revealed” does not mean the immediate communication of knowledge by inspiration, for that would not have insured Peter’s blessedness,† but the teaching of God, which had removed those proud and carnal prejudices that veiled the minds of many others who enjoyed the same outward means, yet could not understand what was in itself most plain, that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

The next verse, “Thou art Peter,” etc., has a reference to the name which Jesus gave the apostle at their first interview. Simon was his original name, to which Jesus added Cephas, (Syriac,) or Peter,‡ (Greek,) which signifies a stone. “The word translated *rock* is of similar meaning with the name of Peter, but it is not the same word. Nothing however can be more absurd than to suppose that Christ meant that the *person* of Peter was the rock on which the church should be built, except it be the wild notion that the bishops of Rome have since been substituted in his place. ‘Their rock is not as our rock, our enemies themselves being judges.’ Without doubt Christ himself is the Rock and tried Foundation

* Matt. xvi. 17—19.

† See Matt. vii. 21—23.

‡ John i. 42.

of the church, (Isa. xxviii. 16,) and woe be to him who attempts to lay any other ! (1 Cor. iii. 11.) But Peter's confession is the rock *doctrinally*. It contains that fundamental truth respecting the person and offices of Christ, upon which, as a rock, he would build his church. The profession of the truths involved in it constitutes a man a member of the visible church ; the vital belief of them constitutes a member of the *real* church, however he may err in other matters : but nothing less than this can entitle any one to the name of a believer.*

This foundation is so sure, that all the devices of devils and men shall never subvert the church that is built upon it. "Nor could the powers of death, or the entrance into the eternal world, destroy the hope of those who should build upon it : but one generation of believers should be raised up as others were removed to heaven, to profess the same great truths to the end of time ; and the whole company would be made more than conquerors, and be saved by the belief of them, to all eternity."

It has been said that this distinction, supposing the *rock* to mean Peter, was conferred "in his being honoured to lay the first foundation of the Christian church, both among Jews (Acts ii.) and Gentiles (Acts x.). But to *lay* a foundation and to *be* a foundation are widely different things, and certainly Peter *was* the foundation in no other sense than the rest of the apostles were."†

As to the authority with which Peter was invested, he had spoken in the name of the rest as

* Scott, Exposition.

† Eph. ii. 20—22.

well as his own, and doubtless this related to them as well as to him (Matt. xviii. 18 ; John xx. 22, 23).

Keys were an ancient emblem of authority, and to the apostles Christ committed authority in his church. “ They were endued with the Holy Spirit, that they might infallibly declare his truth to mankind, and determine what was binding on the conscience and what was not ; to show what persons ought to be admitted into the church, or excluded from it ; to decide on the characters of those whose sins were forgiven, or the contrary ; and whatever in these and similar respects they bound or loosed on earth, would be bound or loosed in heaven. The apostles themselves had not an infallible insight into the characters of men ; and they were liable to mistakes and sins in their own conduct. But they were infallibly preserved from error in stating the way of acceptance and salvation, the rule of obedience, the believers’ character and experience, and the final doom of unbelievers, hypocrites, and apostates. In such things their decision was absolute, and ratified in heaven, as all will find at last, even they who now despise it. In this respect their apostolical authority continues in their doctrine, as transmitted to us in the New Testament : but all other ministers, of whatever rank, name, or age, can do no more than declare the doctrine of the apostles, and apply it to particular cases, by preaching the word, administering Divine ordinances, admitting men into the visible church, or excluding them from it ; or by personal encouragement and warning. As far as they proceed according to the Scriptures in these things, their decisions are warranted and are ratified in heaven ; but not

when they mistake either in the doctrine, or in its application to particular persons and characters.”* The value of these remarks will justify the length of the quotations. They are such as commend themselves to an unprejudiced mind as conveying the true sense of the passage which has been wrested to establish a vain claim of supremacy for the apostle Peter, and made a stepping-stone to worldly distinctions by men altogether destitute of Peter’s spirit. In support of the former claim it has been alleged by Papists that our Lord distinguished Peter after his resurrection by a special message,† a separate interview,‡ a special investment of the office of shepherd or bishop in his church,§ and a special prediction of his martyrdom.|| This is perfectly true. But these facts show rather the abounding riches of Christ’s forgiving love to one who felt conscious of having forfeited all claim to it, than afford any ground of self-elevation to the apostle; nor were they misunderstood by himself. The message was a word of encouragement to Peter, who might otherwise have deemed himself cut off from the privileges of a disciple for his grievous sin in denying his Lord. The interview was a personal assurance of forgiveness; the charge was a reinstatement in office in the presence of his brethren. It suggests some things by no means agreeable to the haughty, worldly-minded prelates who seek to ground their elevation on Peter’s supremacy. Christ employs none to feed and rule his flock but those who love

* Scott.

† Mark xvi. 7.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 5; Luke xxiv. 34. § John xxi. 15—17.

|| John xxi. 18, 19.

him ; and those who love him and his cause will show it by their laborious, self-denying efforts, by their condescension, compassion, and care for the weakest and the meanest of his flock.

Having admitted that, in several instances, Christ distinguished Peter, it is but right to notice that on several occasions he censured him, for his self-confidence,* for his vain curiosity and improper interference,† and especially for his opposition to the sufferings and death of his Master,‡ when he received the very same rebuke as had before been given to the grand adversary of God and man—"Get thee behind me, Satan : thou art an offence unto me ; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

It may be remarked further, that Peter himself never assumed any superiority over his fellow apostles ; when they met, he was one among the rest ; when he wrote, he exhorted elders as a fellow elder.§ He mentioned Paul with the highest respect and affection,|| though the latter had been called to the apostleship long after him, and though he (Peter) had on one occasion been faithfully rebuked by him.¶ Nor did the other apostles set Peter above them. Paul says he was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.** He classes together "James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars ;"†† and elsewhere, "Paul, Apollos, Cephas," as those whom the contentious Corinthians would set at the head of their parties.‡‡

* Mark xiv. 29—31.

† John xxi. 22.

‡ Matt. xvi. 23.

§ 1 Pet. v. 1.

|| 2 Pet. iii. 15.

¶ Gal. ii. 11.

** 2 Cor. xi. 5.

†† Gal. ii. 9.

‡‡ 1 Cor. i. 12.

But what ever priority Peter himself might have possessed, not a word is said in Scripture of his having any successors to whom to bequeath it. The authority of the apostles over all churches was peculiar, and died with them; they had no successors in their apostolical work, because the work of the law-giving was finished, and those who came after them were tied to the execution of their laws. Besides, if Peter had left a successor, would he not have been careful to point him out so distinctly that there need be no hesitation on his part in taking up the office, nor on the part of the believers in submitting to him, as to the party appointed? Not long before his death, and in full expectation of it, the apostle was very careful to press upon his fellow Christians those important truths which he had preached among them, which they knew, and in which they were at present well established. But knowing how likely it was, when the living voice was no longer heard, that some of them might forget or be turned away from what they had heard and known, he said he would endeavour* that they might be able, after his decease, to have these things always in remembrance; and the most effectual means he could devise for accomplishing his desire, was to write them in a letter, which, forming part of the Holy Scriptures, might be always at hand for reference. How easy it would have been to have added, “To that end I leave a successor whom you must hear in all things.” We find Moses was very careful to leave a successor,† and so were Elijah‡ and David;§

* 2 Pet. i. 12—15.

† 1 Kings xix. 16, 19.

† Numb. xxvii. 15—17.

§ 1 Kings i. 32—35.

and Christ says, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."* Was Peter the only careless person that would not be at the expense of a word to prevent all those heresies, schisms, and contentions, which were even then broached, and were likely to increase in the Christian world after the death of the apostles ?

Besides, if any did succeed Peter in his headship, one would think it should have been one of the surviving apostles, especially St. John, who lived above thirty years after him. For who can believe (that regards what he believes) that Linus, or Clements, who is said to be St. Peter's successor, should be superior to St. John ?" And yet Peter's supremacy, and the pretended succession of the bishops of Rome, form the whole foundation of the arrogant claims of the pope to universal authority.

* John xx. 21.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHURCH OF ROME CONTINUED—UNIVERSALITY
AND INFALLIBILITY.

THERE are in England many denominations of Christians—Episcopalians, and Methodists, and Presbyterians, and Baptists, and Independents, and others. If knowledge were perfect, we should all see alike. There would be no difference of judgment or practice in religion, for truth itself is one, and only one set of rules is given for our guidance. But we are all the subjects of much remaining error and darkness. Those who best know themselves will be least likely to assume that they are in every thing right, and that all who differ from them must be wrong. It is the duty of every Christian to search the Scriptures for himself, diligently, carefully, humbly, and prayerfully; and having done so, to follow out his honest convictions, in associating himself with this or that particular body of Christians. At the same time, he should give other Christians full credit for having conscientiously done the same, although they have arrived at a different conclusion on lesser points. He should rejoice to think that they are all resting on Christ alone for salvation, and doing the will of God from the heart; and in spirit, word, and deed, he should heartily say, “ Grace be with

all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

Thus in the best sense all these believers of different names are one—one in Christ Jesus. But, in another sense, they are perfectly and properly distinct. No one has a right to interfere with another, or to compel him to attend a ministry, or mode of worship, or to practise observances which he conscientiously disapproves ; and any attempt to do it would at least be deemed a breach of Christian courtesy and good manners. But how does the pope of Rome regard us all ? "Why, perhaps he neither knows nor cares any thing about us." Far otherwise. He looks after us as his own property ; not exactly as sheep who have strayed from his fold, for sheep are not blamed for their wandering, they are kindly sought, and if they cannot be reclaimed are pitied ; but rather as a slave-holder would look after slaves that had made their escape from bondage, and whom he would be inclined to punish for running away.

"But we have neither strayed from his fold, nor run away from his service. We were brought up among Christians of a certain denomination ; and believing their views to be in accordance with Scripture, we have adhered to them. Or—We were altogether unconcerned about religion, and lived many years without God in the world. But through the great mercy of God, we have been made acquainted with the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. We build all our hopes upon it, and desire to live in obedience to his commands. We think the word of God enjoins———and therefore we have joined the body of Christians whose

views and practices correspond with what appears to us right. As to the church of Rome, or the pope, we never had any thing at all to do with them."

So it might be fairly concluded. But the pope takes a very different view of the case. *He* says, that there is but one baptism, which baptism he takes for granted *must* be derived from the church of Rome, by whomsoever it may have been administered, and that therefore all baptized persons throughout the world really belong to the Catholic (Romish) church.* Those who have not been baptized he calls infidels; those who have been baptized—not churchmen—or dissenters—but HERETICS. And how does he deal with heretics? If they are *not* within the reach of his power, he speaks to them kindly and soothingly, and tries to persuade them that it is their duty and interest to return to the bosom of the holy Catholic church. "But how can I, interposes some plain-spoken Englishman, how can I *return* to a place or position in which I have never before been?" Hush, hush, let the holy father go on with his speech: he promises to those who return safety and satisfaction such as can be no where else enjoyed; nothing to disturb or perplex them as to whether they are right or wrong; no anxieties about the safety of their soul: only let them return, and all shall be settled for them; and that without obliging them to forsake any little sin that they may wish to retain: or if they are seriously concerned about personal holiness, they may enter on a course of observances and discipline that will

* Milner's End of Controversy.

insure them such degrees of perfection as can be no where else attained. But mark, all this persuasion and these blandishments, and tenfold more, are addressed to heretics, who are *out of reach* of the arm of secular power. The gentle voice that addresses them is that of the wolf *outside* of the fold. For heretics that are within reach of papal despotism there are other arguments—spiritual courts, anathemas, inquisition, racks, dungeons, death. “We will have but one religion,” said Louis XIV., the popish tyrant of France; and the pope, not one pope or another, but *the* pope, whoever he may be, (for it is an essential principle of Popery,) only waits till circumstances put it in his power, to say the very same thing—We will have but one religion, and every body shall belong to it. The church of Rome is “the mother and mistress of all churches.”* The pope is the head of that church, and his will is law. To this every popish priest swears, and every Roman Catholic is bound to “profess and undoubtedly believe it.” Protestants do not either profess or believe; but the pope thinks they ought to do both; and, if he had it in his power, he would make them.

Then, the church of Rome maintains the necessity of an infallible living judge to decide all controversies, and of course assumes that that judge is in herself. They have at Rome an old chair, in which they say that St. Peter used to sit when he gave laws to the church: by the bye, some who have seen the chair and examined its inscriptions, maintain that it belonged to the false prophet

* Pope Pius’s creed.

Mohammed : however, they add, that when the pope sits in this chair, in virtue of his descent from St. Peter, what he decrees is free from error. It is not quite agreed whether the infallibility belongs to the pope alone, or to the pope and his clergy conjointly. Dr. Milner says, "A general council with the pope at its head, or the pope himself, issuing any doctrinal decision which is received by the great body of Catholic bishops, is SECURE FROM ERROR."*

It is true that popes have contradicted popes, and some popes have been even excommunicated as heretics.† Some councils have been convened by emperors, not by popes, and even against the will of the popes. Many popes have been notoriously wicked men. Some councils have contradicted and set aside what other councils decreed ; for instance, the council of Nice (A. D. 324) pronounced the bishops of Rome and Constantinople *equal*. Many councils have declared the bishop of Rome supreme. The council of Constantinople, in 754,‡ condemned the worship of images, and commanded them to be removed from churches. The council of Nice (A. D. 787) established image worship. The council of Laodicea, about 360 or 370, rejected the Apocrypha. The council of Trent received it.§ The first council of Nice (324) established the creed called the Nicene Creed, and declared with anathemas that no new article should ever be added to it. The council of Trent (A. D. 1545) added twelve new articles, with anathemas against all who do not embrace them.

* End of Controversy, Letter xii. p. 84.

† Dupin, vol. v. pp. 47, 89, 145, 157 ; vol. ii. 62, 63.

‡ Dupin, vol. vi. 135—152.

§ Dupin, vol. ii. 268.

Now we poor Protestants cannot understand how all these things can consist with infallibility. Truth is one, and cannot contradict itself. What does not consist with truth is error, (if it be not wilful falsehood,) and the person who holds it cannot be infallible. But the church of Rome maintains that it *is* infallible. People in England and Ireland, and other countries far away from the pope, and who have never seen or known any thing about the holding of a council beyond what their priests have told them, may form very reverential ideas of such a meeting and such a president, and be led to believe that what they agree in must be true and right. But they cannot quite put away their common sense, and when they see and know the character of some of the priests, the question *will* present itself to their minds, Are these priests infallible too? This is among the dangerous questions which the teachers of Popery labour to suppress. They turn away the attention of the inquirer from the persons with whom he actually comes in contact, and of whose instructions and conduct, if left to himself, he could form a judgment, and bidding him look to "*the church*," advise him to "trust his soul to her unerring judgment, in preference to his own fluctuating opinion."* "The Catholic peasant," we are told, "most likely learned the doctrine of the church from his parish priest; but then he knows that the doctrine of this priest must be conformable to that of his bishop, and that otherwise he will soon be called to account for it; he knows .

* Milner's End of Controversy, p. 125.

also that the doctrine of the bishop himself must be conformable to that of other bishops and of the pope; and that it is a fundamental maxim with them all never to admit of any tenet, but such as is believed by all the bishops, and was believed by their predecessors up to the apostles themselves.”* Where the peasantry are to be found who *know* all these things it is hard to say; but if all this knowledge is expected from them, we do not wonder that they are ready to cut the matter short by saying, “I believe all that the church believes and teaches;”† and if they say this and adhere to it, they will not be troubled with many inquiries as to the ground of their faith or the extent of their knowledge. Happily there are many peasants who, though they know nothing of the pope, and councils, and bishops, and priests, which Popery would interpose between them and their faith, know from Christ and his apostles themselves all that is needful for the salvation of their souls. They know that Christ Jesus‡ came into the world to save sinners; that he § is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; that he casts || out none who come; and that all who believe in him ¶ shall be saved; and they know whom they have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which they have committed to him against that day.** These are *infallible* truths and worthy of *universal* acceptance. *All* who rest upon them are true members

* Milner, p. 126.

† Douay Catechism.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 15. · § Heb. vii. 25. || John vi. 37.

¶ Acts xvi. 31.

** 2 Tim. i. 12.

of the *universal* church, and shall *infallibly* be saved. All who persist in rejecting or neglecting them, belong to what professing church they may, will as certainly perish. “For there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* And “how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”†

* Acts iv. 12.

† Heb. ii. 3.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHURCH OF ROME—ITS TREATMENT OF SCRIPTURE.

ONE of the great errors of the Jews, and one which our Lord severely reproved, was this, “*Laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men.*” “Full well ye *reject the commandment of God*, that ye may *keep your own tradition.*” * Tradition has been already spoken of as an uncertain and unnecessary rule. But these are not its only or its greatest defects. The words of our Lord just quoted plainly charge upon it something far worse than mere uncertainty or superfluity. They teach us that tradition *lays aside* the commands of God; and that when men want to *keep* and establish their own traditions, they *reject* or push out of the way the commandments of God that are contrary to them. That which was charged upon the Jews and their traditions is fully applicable to the Papists and theirs.

Tradition not only insults the Bible, by supposing it insufficient, and offering itself to supply the deficiency; it absolutely supersedes the Bible to make room for itself.

In the first place, we are told by the church of Rome that we are to receive the Holy Scriptures

* Mark vii. 8, 9.

as the word of God *because the church tells us they are so*; that the truths of Scripture are to be believed and its precepts obeyed, not because men see for themselves that they are taught in Scripture, but because the church says they are. If our gracious queen should condescend to visit the house of one of her subjects, would it not be the greatest insult imaginable to refuse to admit her Majesty, unless some mean and insignificant person should step in first to introduce her? Or if she should state a fact or promise a favour, to withhold belief and confidence, unless some other person should vouch for her word? And shall the King of kings and Lord of lords be treated with an indignity which we would not offer to an earthly sovereign? When He would speak to us in his holy word, shall He be kept back as an unwelcome intruder, or treated as a suspicious witness, unless what He says is corroborated by human authority? No; surely we should rather turn from all the world and say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth."

Then, the Scriptures must be received only in the sense in which the church receives them. The Roman Catholic is told, not to read and search and examine, as the Bereans did,* not to meditate upon the Scriptures, as David did, and pray to be helped and directed to understand them aright—"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."† No; he is to shut his own eyes, and see—what the church tells him is to be seen. There is no mistake in saying this; for there it is, in the profession of faith of every Romanist—"I also admit the sacred Scriptures

* Acts xvii. 11.

† Psal. cxix. 148, 18.

according to the sense in which the holy mother church has held, and does hold, to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures ; nor will I ever take or interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the holy fathers.”*

If a priest of Rome converses with a Protestant, and the latter attempts to prove or disprove any thing from Scripture, he is directly told, You have no right to argue from Scripture—“the whole business of Scripture belongs to the church. She has preserved them, she vouches for them, and she alone, by confronting the several passages with each other, and by the help of tradition, authoritatively explains them. Hence it is impossible that the real sense of Scripture should ever be against her and her doctrine ; and hence, of course, I might quash every objection which you might draw from any passage in it by this short reply, *The church understands the passage differently from you, and therefore you must mistake its meaning.*”†

Another great insult put upon the Scriptures, and a tremendous injury to the people, is the withholding them from the laity. Before the Reformation, in the sixteenth century, the Scriptures were studiously withheld from the people, and very little studied by the priests ; many, nay, most of whom were totally ignorant of the word of God. The mere fact of possessing a Bible would subject a man to the charge of heresy ; and his refusing to give it up, would condemn him to the flames. This

* Pope Pius's creed.

† Milner's End of Controversy, p. 118.

has been the case many times in our own country. However, people did read and would read ; and the multiplication of Bibles by the art of printing, gave full employment to the deputies and “ inquisitors of heretical pravity,” to go about and search the printing-offices and booksellers’ shops to see “ that nothing prohibited might be printed, kept, or sold.” And among the books prohibited we find “ THE HOLY BIBLE IN THE VULGAR TONGUE !” of which they say that, “ Inasmuch as it is manifest by experience, that if it be indiscriminately allowed to every one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it ;” it is only to be allowed now and then to a few persons of whom the bishops or inquisitors think that their faith and piety will be augmented and not hindered by it. Then, the translation allowed must be that of Roman Catholic authors, and the permission to read it must be in writing. And “ if any one shall have the presumption to read or possess it without such written permission, he shall not receive absolution until he have first delivered up such Bible to the ordinary.” Those who keep or read books interdicted, and the Bible in the vulgar tongue is one of them, “ shall instantly incur the sentence of excommunication, and, besides the mortal sin committed, shall be severely punished at the will of the bishop.”*

And let it not be supposed that these are old worn-out statutes. No : “ the authority of the index (list of forbidden books) is acknowledged and felt in the nineteenth century ; and in Roman

* See Council of Trent. Index of prohibited books, published 1564.

Catholic countries the censorship of the press, and the tyrannical vigilance of the priests, perpetuate the dominion of ignorance, enslave and fetter the human mind, and inflict untold misery, religious and political, on a suffering people." In Ireland, the ignorant Catholics are taught that it is a mortal sin to have or read a Bible; and thousands of them would be as much afraid to touch a Bible as to put their hand into a lion's mouth. And no wonder; for their infallible pope, Leo XII., no longer ago than 1824, wrote what is called an encyclical letter, charging all the Roman Catholic clergy by all means to turn away their flocks from *those poisonous pastures*, the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue. To the influence of Popery alone, and principally to the opposition of Popery to the diffusion of the Holy Scriptures, is the fact fairly ascribable, that in seventy-five towns in Ireland, with an average population of 2500, there is not, at the present time, to be found a single book-seller's shop, or any other means for the diffusion of knowledge. In Italy, and especially in Rome, the people really do not know what the Bible is. They will say they have it in their possession, and produce instead a Roman Breviary, or Missal, or "Stories from the Bible, with moral reflections." Even a priest, pointing to extracts from the Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other sacred writers, maintained that it was the Bible, or at least it was "the same thing." An English clergyman, endeavouring to procure a Bible in Rome, went to one of the principal bookseller's shops. The bookseller said, "Here is one." "Do you call that a Bible? Pray how many volumes are there? It looks more like

a library than a Bible." " Seventy-seven volumes, sir ! " The text could scarcely be discerned amidst the cumbrous mass of notes. If such is the only accessible Bible, it is scarcely necessary to call councils and make laws to forbid the poor from possessing it. Another English clergyman mentions having given a New Testament to a Roman Catholic female, to whom it was made a blessing. Two or three years passed before he again saw her. She then avowed the change that, by the grace of God, had been wrought in her. In the course of conversation she said to him, " For a long time after you gave me that Testament, though I did read it, and read it often, I never did so without feeling afterwards as if I had committed a crime. I could not help taking the book and reading it ; but I was frightened at having done so."

" But why did you think it a crime ? Why were you frightened ? " I asked.

" O sir," she said, with a look of surprise, " do you not know that our priests will not allow us to read that book ? "

There is yet one more grievous charge against the church of Rome, in reference to the Bible, and that is *corrupting it* ; this it does in two ways :

1. By the insertion of the apocryphal books in the Old Testament, which they well know to be no part of the canon of Scripture ; which were never acknowledged by the Jews, as we learn from Josephus, the Jewish historian ;* which were expressly rejected by the Christian church at the

* Josephus, " Epistle to Epaphroditus," book i. p. 386. Bradshaw's edition.

council of Laodicea;* and, as to their authority, by Jerome, one of the most laborious and learned translators of Scripture. His Latin translation is so highly esteemed in the church of Rome, that it is adopted as her standard Bible. He admits the apocryphal books, but utterly denies their inspiration and authority. He says the church reads them for instruction in life and manners, but not as canonical Scriptures, or for the confirmation of any doctrine. Indeed, he says of all apocryphal writings, that they ought never to be read but with great wariness and prudence.

Nor were any of the apocryphal books ever admitted into the canon of Scripture by any denomination of Christians, until the council of Trent imposed them upon the credulity of those who were willing to submit to its decision.† These apocryphal books, which in many instances are directly opposed to the principles and tenor of the Holy Scriptures, and abound with ridiculous stories, are interspersed with the books of the Old Testament in all Roman Catholic Bibles, as if they were of equal authority with the rest, and are so regarded by the people.

2. The other corruption of Scripture is by a mistranslation of words, to serve the purpose of diffusing Popish tenets. Many instances might be given. The words for “repent,” or “repentance,” are almost invariably translated “do penance.” The second commandment (which forbids idol worship) is altogether left out in many of their catechisms, and the tenth divided to make up the number

* Du Pin, vol. ii. 268.

† See Nangle’s Gospel Lever. Appendix A. p. 125—129.

complete. In the Italian school catechism, the decalogue, professedly taken from the Bible, not only omits the second commandment, but alters the fourth, from an injunction to observe the sabbath, to "Remember that thou keep holy the *days of festivals*."

The Bourdeaux New Testament, published in 1686, for the sake of appeasing and beguiling those who cried out for the word of God, was so translated as really to contain the peculiar dogmas of the Romish church. There is "the sacrifice of the mass," and "the sacrament of marriage," and "traditions," and "pilgrimages," and "wicked heretics," and various other most audacious corruptions and interpolations.* But the tampering was too palpable. Though the book was printed by the royal and university printer, and sanctioned by dignitaries of the church, it brought folly and shame on the perpetrators and on the cause they designed to serve; and every effort was made to conceal the disgrace by destroying the whole edition. A very few copies are yet in existence.

"Every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd."†

"Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."‡ "THY word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it."§

Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.

* See Benoit's History of the Edict of Nantes, vol. iii. part 3, page 944.

† John iii. 20. ‡ Prov. xxx. 6. § Psal. cxix. 140.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHURCH OF ROME—ITS WORSHIP—LATIN PRAYERS—
MANY MEDIATORS—WORSHIP OF SAINTS AND THE VIRGIN.

By worship we mean those acts of religious adoration by which we expressly draw near to God, with a view both to increase and to express our sense of his greatness and goodness, to implore from him the mercies we need both for our bodies and our souls, and to give him thanks for what we receive. Such worship as the royal psalmist invites us to when he says, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."* "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name."† Such worship as our Lord taught us to offer to our Father in heaven,‡ which he said must be presented "in spirit and in truth,"§ and in his name.|| Such worship as the apostle, by considerations of the compassion and sympathy of our great High Priest and Mediator, encourages

* Psal. xcv. 6. † Psal. c. 3, 4. ‡ Matt. vi. 9—13.

§ John iv. 24. || John xvi. 26; xiv. 6.

us to offer: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."* This is a little of what the Bible teaches us about worship. Many more passages might be adduced, all to the same effect; and certainly not one that prescribes or suggests any other way.

But the worship of the church of Rome is widely different from this. In the first place, all the prayers and praises of the Romish church are recited in Latin, a language not understood by one in fifty of the worshippers. When the prayers were composed, Latin, being the language of Rome, was generally spoken throughout the Roman dominions. But when the Roman empire was broken up, other languages were brought in by the conquerors, or learned by those who had been Roman subjects when they were removed to other countries. In course of time the Latin tongue was forgotten by the generality of people. It became what is called "a dead language," known only by study, and preserved chiefly by means of books. It therefore became utterly unfit for expressing the devotions, desires, and thanksgivings of unlearned people in general. The language of the countries nearest Rome—Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal, are something like the Latin language; and the people accustomed to speak those languages may, if they pay very great attention, make out a little of what is spoken in Latin. But in the sacred acts of solemn prayer and praise, the attention ought not to be taken up with puzzling over ill-understood

* Heb. iv. 16.

words. The words should rather be so simple, clear, and intelligible, as to present thoughts to the mind, and carry along with them the feelings of the heart. As to people in England, Ireland, and America, the great mass of them do not know a word of Latin, nor of any language akin to it. It is true there is an English version of some of the Romish services, drawn up for the use of the laity; but great numbers of them cannot read, and to those who can, it must be a very perplexing exercise, to hear prayers spoken in one language, and at the same time be reading them in another. It is much to be feared, that a large proportion of ignorant people, from the habit of hearing words of which they do not know the meaning, come to be indifferent about them. They think it is no business of theirs to try to understand, and are satisfied with having been present while the service was gone through. Can such worship be either acceptable to God, or beneficial to themselves?

This, taken in connexion with the withholding of the Scripture from the common people, so far from binding them to God, has a fearful tendency to take them off from God, and bind them to the priest. They are kept in a state of unconscious and helpless dependence, both in their faith and their worship. They are taught to trust to the priest to manage all affairs between them and God. The priests of Rome in effect adopt the impious decree of Darius,* and that, not for thirty days only, but for life, and forbid their priest-ridden votaries to ask any petitions of God or man, save of them.

* Dan. vi. 7.

They indeed call the people “the faithful” in distinction from heretics; and they talk of their having “faith in prayer.” But they do not mean the faith of a sinner who “believes in the Lord Jesus and is saved;” * nor the faith of a humble suppliant, who believes that God hears and answers prayer, † and who, having by prayer and supplication made known his requests unto God, finds the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keeping his heart and mind through Christ Jesus ‡ No: it is the faith that, without reason, trusts a fellow-creature to perform an unmeaning ceremony, and goes away satisfied that the duty is performed and the benefit secured, “that” (as it was once expressed to the writer) “whatever is necessary will come about.” Oh how can reasonable beings satisfy themselves with such proxy religion? The whole Bible testifies against it. Justly and forcibly has it been said, “The concerns of a man’s soul, the business of his personal salvation, is what he cannot devolve upon another. This is a matter which every man must understand for himself. There is neither salvation nor damnation by proxy. The word of God addresses men as individuals, and all men without distinction.” Every one must repent, and believe, and pray, and love, and obey, *for himself*, and give account *for himself*. § “If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for *thyself*; but if thou scornest, *thou alone* shalt bear it.” || But, when the “people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,” ¶ what will be the

* Acts xvi. 31. † Psal. lxxv. 2. ‡ Phil. iv. 6, 7.

§ Rom. xiv. 12. || Prov. ix. 12.

¶ Hos. iv. 6—9.

portion of the priests—the blind guides, who shut up the kingdom of heaven against men?*

The worship of the Romish church is unlike that of Scripture, as it approaches, or attempts to approach, God by mediators whom he has not authorized or appointed.

“There is ONE Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”† “For through HIM we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”‡ “Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”§ Jesus, “because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”||

Such are the express directions and consolatory assurances of Scripture, which may well encourage our “access with confidence, by the faith of him,”¶ believing that a God of infinite majesty and purity can favourably regard, graciously accept, and abundantly bless us, notwithstanding our conscious guilt and pollution, *because he has said he will.*

If these and many other passages of Scripture mean any thing, they surely teach us that no other

* Matt. xxiii. 13.

† Eph. ii. 18.

‡ Heb. vii. 24, 25.

† 1 Tim. ii. 5.

§ Heb. x. 19—22.

¶ Eph. iii. 12.

way of access can be either necessary or available. God, in the person of Christ Jesus, has set wide open a way of free access for guilty man. To attempt to "climb up by some other way"* must be insulting and offensive to God, as well as needless and unprofitable to man.

But the church of Rome thinks *many* mediators are required, and the people are taught to seek the intercession of many. "Many of the prayers and devotional exercises prepared for their use seem to have a savour of piety ; but their good effect is neutralized, by the perpetual reference to angelic guardians and saintly intercessors. The obedient son of the church is constantly reminded of his obligations to these invisible friends. Almost every day is devoted to the memory of some one of their number. Their shrines and altars are honoured by his frequent visits. He supposes them to preside over his affairs, and to administer perpetual guidance and protection——he is instructed to implore their intercession on his behalf ;"† and his prayers are offered through their intercession, thus—"Mercifully look upon us by the intercession of blessed Thomas,‡ thy martyr and bishop."

The bishops and others are commanded "with diligent assiduity to instruct the faithful concerning the invocation and intercession of the saints—teaching them that the saints who reign together with Christ, offer their prayers to God for men—

* John x. 1.

† Text Book of Popery, 349.

‡ Not Thomas the apostle, but Thomas-à-Becket, archbishop of Canterbury. Though it little matters which ; the best and the worst of creatures are on a level when set up in interference with the one mediation of Jesus.

that it is a good and useful thing suppliantly to invoke them, to *flee to their prayers*, help, and assistance.”*

The Catechism admits that “there is but one Mediator, Christ the Lord, who—ceases not to intercede for us;” but denies “that it is therefore unlawful to have recourse to the intercession of saints;” it contends that if it were unlawful to ask the intercession of saints in heaven, the apostle Paul did wrong in desiring the prayers of his brethren on earth, and asserts that the prayers of the living would derogate from the glory and dignity of Christ as Mediator, not less than the intercession of the saints in heaven.”† This is not true. First, because we have express Scripture precept and precedent for praying with and for one another on earth,‡ while we have neither precept nor example§ for desiring the prayers of saints in heaven; nor any reason whatever for supposing that they are offered or would be accepted on our behalf, while we have reason to think the contrary. Elijah, when about to ascend to heaven, said to his servant and successor, “Ask what I shall do for thee *before I be taken away from thee.*”|| Not only giving no intimation of being sought to as an intercessor after he had

* Decree of the Council of Trent.

† Catechism of Council of Trent.

‡ Matt. v. 44; James v. 16; 2 Thess. iii. 1; Eph. vi. 18; Rom. xv. 30; Acts xii. 5; Rom. i. 9; Eph. i. 15, 16; Phil. i. 4; 1 Thess. v. 23.

§ The application of the deceased rich man to Abraham in the parable, gives no encouragement to the practice. Luke xvi. 24.

|| 2 Kings ii. 9

entered heaven, but in a very decisive manner implying the contrary. Secondly, we can obtain the prayers of Christians on earth ; we know generally, that it is their duty to pray for all fellow Christians and for all mankind, and we can make special application to them to do so on our behalf, having access to them either by word of mouth or by letter, as the apostle had. But no way of intercourse with departed saints is opened to us in Scripture, though in Christ we are all one family in heaven and earth, and “are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”* What those happy spirits know of us, we are not informed. Angels we know are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation ;† but we have no personal intercourse with either, and no intercourse with God through them. Most justly has it been said, “Where revelation has no voice, we should have no ear ; where it has no object, we should have no eye ;” and “in matters of religion the absence of a command should be regarded as a prohibition.”

What seems a small innovation makes way for a greater, and the vain desire of having saints and angels as intercessors, soon led to addressing them as *objects of worship*. “God and the saints,” says Milner, “are not to be prayed to in the same manner ; for we pray to God that he himself would give us good things ; but we beg of the saints, because

* Eph. iii. 15 ; Heb. xii. 22, 23.

† Heb. i. 14.

they are pleasing to God, that they would be our advocates, and obtain from God what we stand in need of.”* Thus though a distinction is made by the Romanists themselves, and ought to be admitted by those who reject their tenets and practices, as to the *kind* of worship given to saints, the *fact* is not denied by Romanists, and ought to be held in abhorrence, as contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. If God *is* worshipped by them, if the Saviour’s intercession *is* remembered, it is not with that exclusive adoration and dependence which the Scriptures enjoin. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”† “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth : for I am God, and there is none else.”‡ “My glory will I not give to another.”§ “I have trodden the winepress alone ; and of the people there was none with me.”||

Multitudes of ignorant people do not enter into the distinction of supreme and subordinate worship, and those who do make a distinction, cannot fail to entertain hard and unworthy thoughts of God, whom they contemplate not as “waiting to be gracious,” “delighting in mercy,” “abundant in mercy,” “rich in mercy to all that call upon him,” but as harsh, unwilling to bestow his blessings, and needing the persuasions of saints to induce him to listen to the prayers of sinners. Oh how unlike the representations which the Bible gives us of God as a tender Father, running to meet and embrace his prodigal child ;¶ knowing

* Milner, End of Religious Controversy, p. 248.

† Matt. iv. 10. ‡ Isa. xlv. 22. § Isa. xlii. 8.

|| Isa. lxiii. 3. ¶ Luke xv. 20.

what things his children need, yet loving to hear their prayers ; promising to give good things to them that ask him ;* bidding them call upon him in the time of trouble, and engaging to hear and deliver them ! †

“ The light of the body is the eye : if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ! ” ‡ When the eye of faith clearly discerns and is steadily fixed on the one living and true God, to be approached by the one Mediator, the soul is established in truth, and goes on its way rejoicing ; but a multitude of objects of worship can produce nothing but confusion and distraction of mind ; the soul is lost in bewilderment and error. Such is the practical effect of the Romish worship of lords many and gods many.

It has been asked who are the saints worshipped in the Roman Catholic church ? It would be difficult as well as unprofitable to enumerate them. Some who are thus worshipped were saints indeed, and could they know the idolatry that is practised in their names, would be ready, as Paul and Barnabas did in the days of their flesh, to run in among the people and say, Sirs, why do ye these things ? We preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God. § Both Paul and Barnabas are on the catalogue of canonized saints. There are some, however, of whose holiness we have very little assurance ; some whose very existence is justly doubted ; and some whose

* Luke xii. 30 ; xi. 13.

† Psal. l. 15.

‡ Matt. vi. 22, 23.

§ Acts xiv. 15.

character was such that it is no breach of charity to apprehend that they are in a far different region than heaven, and that their worshippers may be praying to devils rather than to saints. It may be added, that, from some circumstances connected with the life or death of the supposed saint, some particular department of healing or preservation is supposed to be committed to his charge. Hence Romanists pray to one saint for preservation from storms, to another from shipwreck, to one against plagues, to another against agues, to another against tooth-ach, and so on.

The first papal canonization was that of Udalric by Pope John xv., A. D. 993. It appears to have been, however, but an adoption, or imitation, of the old pagan apotheosis. Like many more of the superstitions and impieties of the church of Rome, it may be fairly traced to a pagan origin. The pagans owned one supreme God; but in their vain imaginations they degraded him to a level with corrupt man; ascribing to him only the supreme power of doing mischief; and they raised around him a rabble multitude of secondary gods, and of deified heroes, among whom the professed chief could scarcely be distinguished. Alas, that men possessing the Bible, from which to learn the character and will of the one living and true God, should "change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."*

"Creature-worship reaches its utmost height in the virgin Mary. The devout Roman Catholic

* Rom. i. 25.

pays her the most extravagant honour and veneration. The language adopted in addressing her, as the 'Queen of heaven,' the 'Mother of God,' cannot be acquitted of the charge of blasphemy, since prayers are offered directly to her as to a Divine being, and blessings are supplicated as from one who is able to bestow them. In all devotions she has a share. The 'Ave Maria' accompanies the 'Pater noster.' 'Evening, morning, and at noon,' said the psalmist, 'will I pray unto thee, and cry aloud.' The Roman Catholic transfers these services to the virgin. In tender childhood, he is taught to cherish for her the profoundest reverence and the highest affection; throughout life she is the object of his devout regard; five solemn festivals, annually observed to her honour, call forth his ardent love and zeal; and in the hour of death he is taught to place reliance on her mercy. To the ignorant devotee she is more than Christ—than God; he believes she can command her Son; that to her intercession nothing can be denied, and that to her power nothing is impossible.”*

In the "Garden of the Soul," an authorized manual of devotion, there is a litany to the virgin Mary. It begins, "We fly to thy patronage, O holy mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O ever glorious and blessed virgin." Then follow supplications to the blessed Trinity. Then the virgin is again addressed, under no less than forty-four different epithets; at the annunciation of each by the priest, the people respond, "Pray for

* Text Book of Popery, 353.

us.”* In another litany, immediately following supplications to the Trinity, are three supplications to the virgin Mary. Then five to Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, and all angels and blessed spirits ; and fifty-five to apostles, martyrs, fathers, popes, monks, nuns, and saints, male and female, of all orders ! In the Roman Breviary, we find the following exhortation : “ If the winds of temptation arise, if thou run upon the rock of tribulation, look to the star, call upon Mary. If thou art tossed upon the waves of pride, of ambition, of detraction, of envy, look to the star, call upon Mary. If anger or avarice, or the temptations of the flesh, toss the bark of thy mind, look to Mary. If, disturbed with the greatness of thy sins, troubled at the defilement of thy conscience, affrighted at the horrors of the judgment, thou beginnest to be swallowed up in the gulf of sadness, the abyss of despair, think upon Mary. In dangers, in difficulties, in doubts, think upon Mary ; invoke Mary, etc., etc. One prayer, very common, and in such high esteem that, in the year 1817, the pope granted three hundred days’ indulgence† for saying it, addresses the very same petitions to Jesus, Joseph, and Mary—

“ Jesus, Joseph, Mary, I give you my heart and soul.
 Jesus, Joseph, Mary, assist me in my last agony.
 Jesus, Joseph, Mary, I breathe my soul to you in peace.”

It is an avowed feeling among Romanists, that the virgin Mary is more merciful, more gentle, more sympathizing, more ready to hear, than Jesus

* Garden of the Soul, pp. 134, 169, 296—301.

† “ Indulgence ” will be hereafter explained, see p. 182, etc.

Christ, and therefore they pray to her much more frequently and with greater confidence.

In a book called "The Glories of Mary," written by St. Alphonso de Liguori, who was canonized as a saint only a few years ago, and whose book is strongly recommended by the Romish clergy of the present day, there is, among other things, described a vision of St. Bernard, in which he beheld two ladders extending from earth to heaven—two ways by which the sinner could have access to heaven. At the top of one ladder appeared Jesus Christ; those who endeavoured to enter heaven by this ladder, fell constantly back, and utterly failed. At the top of the other ladder appeared the virgin Mary; those who tried to ascend by her ladder, all succeeded, because she put forth her hands to help and encourage them. This vision is made the subject of an altar-piece in a church at Milan.*

The Catholic School Book † directs children thus—"Offer your prayers to the blessed virgin, your guardian angel, your patron, and all the saints together:" and the catechiser examines them as to their obedience. After a profession of adoration to God, desire of pardon, and consecration, (in all which, however, there is no reference to the work of Christ, by which alone either pardon or holiness can be attained,) the catechiser asks, "Q. And what prayers do you say after this? A. I say Our Father, Hail Mary, and the Apostles' Creed, (*prayers* observe,) and I make acts of faith, hope, and the love of God. Q. Do you say any thing

* Mornings with Jesuits, p. 86.

† Catholic School Book, p. 171.

else? *A.* I pray for my friends and my enemies, the living *and the dead*, (observe,) and I beg mercy, grace, and salvation for all. Then I conclude by desiring our blessed Lady to be a mother to me, and by recommending myself to my good angel, and to all the court of heaven.”* It is necessary to refer to some such authoritative documents, to remove from the mind of the reader the common and very natural, though utterly mistaken impression, that the profane and idolatrous veneration of creatures above described, is but a superstition of the vulgar and ignorant. No: the above are but a few out of a multitude of proofs that might be given, that idolatrous worship is professed, and enjoined, and practised by all Romanists without distinction, and as an essential part of their religion.

Now a common-sense Protestant, who has the privilege of thinking for himself, and is not tied down to believe just what the “church” or the “priest” tells him, will perhaps be disposed to ask these questions:—

1. What Scripture foundation has the Romish church for these practices? None whatever. As to the worship of saints and angels, there is not in the New Testament a hint that can warrant it. It is expressly condemned,† and given as one mark of an apostate church, that men should “depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils” (or *concerning demons*, or departed spirits).‡ It was uniformly rejected with horror when offered to the apostles;§ and when

* Abstract of Douay Catechism, p. 76. † Col. ii. 18.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 1. § Acts x. 25, 26; xiv. 14, 15.

offered by the apostle to a created angel.* Wherever in the Old Testament we find instances of worship offered to an angel, and accepted by him, it was not *secondary* worship, as to a created being, but Divine worship, as to God. Something in the narrative uniformly proves that such was intended by the worshipper, and accepted by the uncreated Angel, who is identified with Jehovah.†

As to the virgin Mary—we have no doubt whatever that she was an eminently holy woman; and that she was singularly blessed above all the daughters of Eve, in the distinguishing honour put upon her that she should be the mother of the incarnate Messiah.‡ So much we do know from Scripture. We know too, from her own inspired song, that so far from considering herself a sinless and almost deified being, worthy of Divine honours, she well knew and confessed herself to be a sinful mortal, who needed a Saviour, and who could no otherwise rejoice in God than as she was interested in his salvation, through the promised Messiah. She was saved—not as the mother of Jesus—but as a believer in Jesus.

She is never spoken of in Scripture with any lofty titles, but simply as “Mary;” “the espoused wife of Joseph;” “the young child’s mother;” “the mother of Jesus.”

In the gospel narrative very little mention is made of her, after the birth and childhood of Jesus; and the little that is said seems expressly designed to counteract the false notions and cor-

* Rev. xxii. 8, 9.

† Gen. xxii. 11—18; xxxii. 24—30; xlviii. 15, 16; Judges vi. 11—24, etc.

‡ Luke i. 26—55.

rupt practices resulting from unduly exalting this highly favoured woman. At the presentation of the child Jesus in the temple, Simeon and Anna concurred in testifying to him as the long promised Messiah;* and Simeon predicted the rejection of the Saviour even by his own nation, and intimated to Mary the anguish that should pierce her maternal bosom in the sufferings of her exalted Son; but said not a word of any extraordinary elevation in reserve for herself. At twelve years old Jesus intimated that no earthly relationship must interfere with his devotedness to his heavenly Father's work.† At the marriage feast at Cana, Mary signified to her Son that the wine was exhausted, apparently hoping that he would exert his miraculous power for a supply. His reply was not uncourteous or disrespectful—for “woman” was a form of expression used in addressing even royal females—but decided as to rejecting any interference.‡ “Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not come.” Oh that the unfettered reading of the Scriptures were granted to those deluded thousands who are taught to call upon her not to *beseech*, but to *command* her Son, now that he fills the throne of his glory; though even in his deepest humiliation on earth he would not allow her even to suggest to him in the exercise of his sacred ministry!

On one occasion, when Jesus was preaching within doors, he received an intimation that his mother and his brethren were without, desiring to speak to him. By collating the accounts given by

* Luke ii. 25—38.

† Luke ii. 49.

‡ John ii. 3, 4.

the several evangelists, it appears evident that these anxious relatives were desirous of inducing him to moderate his labours ; but what was the Saviour's answer ? " Who is my mother ? and who are my brethren ! And he stretched forth his hand unto his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren ! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."* On another occasion, one of the company, astonished at his gracious words and mighty works, burst into an exclamation of the blessedness of the woman who had borne and nourished the infancy of such a son. " Yea, rather," was his reply, " blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."†

Of the awful scenes of Calvary Mary was an agonized spectator. Jesus, in the midst of his own sufferings, tenderly mindful of her, directing her attention to his beloved disciple John, said to her, " Woman, behold thy son," and to John, " Behold thy mother ;" and from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.‡ This transaction emphatically marks the termination of all earthly relationships, however near ; and doubtless Mary, as well as Paul, would say, " Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more."§

Once again, and only once, we meet with Mary in Scripture, and that is simply as one among the little band of disciples, who continued together with one accord in prayer and supplication,|| wait-

* Matt. xii. 47—50 ; Mark iii. 21, 31—35 ; Luke viii. 19—21.

† Luke xi. 27, 28.

‡ John xix. 25—27.

§ 2 Cor. v. 16.

|| Acts i. 14.

ing the promised descent of the Holy Ghost. The remaining historical record in the Acts gives us no further particulars of Mary. Nor in the twenty-one apostolical Epistles, nor in the closing book of Revelation, is there a single allusion to her, or any one expression that can be supposed to imply her advocacy in heaven, or any connexion subsisting between her and the church on earth, distinguished from that which connects the universal-body in heaven and earth as one.

This drives us to conclude, either (1.) that the promises of Jesus Christ were not fulfilled to his apostles, in which he engaged to qualify them for their work by bestowing upon them the Holy Spirit, to “bring *all* things to their remembrance,”* and “guide them into *all* truth;”† or (2.) that the apostles, receiving such teaching, were unfaithful to their trust, and did not communicate to the church *all* that was necessary for faith and practice; or (3.) that the supposed advocacy of Mary, and the supposed duty of praying to her, are altogether without scriptural foundation.

But then a second question arises—If this practice of the Romish church is not founded on Scripture, how came it to be established and to prevail so extensively? Several causes may be assigned. There is in human nature a tendency to magnify little things and overlook great ones; and it will generally be found, that in proportion as vital truths are neglected, a superstitious regard to externals prevails.

An undutiful child will sometimes set great

* John xiv. 26.

† John xvi. 13.

store by a trifle that has belonged to his father or his mother—say a lock of hair, or a ring—while yet persisting in a course of conduct that is bringing or has brought the grey hairs of those parents with sorrow to the grave. The Jewish church, at the period of its greatest declension, of its almost entire departure from the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, and the love of God, was most zealous and scrupulous in minute observances, talked loudly about “the temple,” and “this holy place,” and was horrified at the idea of “changing customs.”* So, while the simple, earnest faith that characterized the first Christian converts prevailed, though lesser things were not despised, but treated with due observance, the attention was principally fixed on chief truths, the great Saviour, the great salvation, the glories of eternity: but as these impressions became less vivid, as professing Christians looked less intently on Jesus himself as the Author and Finisher of faith, the more likely they would be to magnify and multiply petty observances. They would regard with superstitious veneration the house in which the incarnate Redeemer had dwelt, the cross on which he had suffered, the tomb in which he had been laid, the mother by whom he was nourished. In this way we may trace the early beginnings of many corrupt practices of the churches, and of none more distinctly than the adoration of Mary.

Another principle of corrupt human nature which has had much to do in promoting creature worship, is a dislike to the character of God, as a

* Matt. xxiii. 23; Jer. vii. 4; Acts vi. 13, 14; xxi. 28; xxiv. 6.

holy and just God, hating sin and not tolerating iniquity.* God has indeed revealed himself in the person of Christ as “a just God and a Saviour;” just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus;† and this, to a truly convinced sinner, is a lovely and inviting character; but not so to him who sees not the evil of sin, who does not long to be rid of it, but who would rather cling to it, and cherishes a secret wish that he could be safe and happy in retaining it. In this state of mind access to a fellow creature, however exalted, seems more desirable than access to God. An undefined hope is cherished that this exalted creature, being very holy, will be acceptable to God, and may have interest to procure favours for one of a different character; also, that in such a being there will be more fellow feeling, perhaps a kind readiness to palliate or connive at sin. The tender sympathy and compassion of the gracious Redeemer are not acceptable, because they are perfectly holy;‡ and the ideas entertained of creature mediators are encouraging and comfortable just in proportion as they lower down the object of worship to the corrupt standard of the worshipper. Hence, many of the most atrocious characters among men, to whom the thought of God was most revolting and appalling, have lived and died in full false confidence, that “blessed St. Francis,” or “blessed St. Patrick,” or above all, “the blessed virgin Mary,” would stand their friend, and all would be well at last. These are not the errors of the ignorant multitude only. The books of instruction

* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; Psal. xcix. 9; Hab. i. 13.

† Isa. xlv. 21; Rom. iii. 26. ‡ Heb. iv. 15, 16.

and devotion put into the hands of all Roman Catholics by their spiritual guides, abound with stories calculated to teach and encourage such false and idolatrous dependence.

Then, tradition is always at hand to make up the deficiencies of Scripture. An expression of some early Christian, perhaps in itself unguarded, perhaps misunderstood, misinterpreted, exaggerated, if not interpolated, is quite basis enough in the Romish church to establish for any practice the sanction of tradition. Indeed there is a traditional story, given in the shape of an annotation on Acts i. 14, in the Rhemish New Testament, which lays a foundation for the idolatrous worship of the virgin Mary, a poor mortal creature, who owed her own salvation to free grace, like any other sinner who believes in the Saviour.

The Rhemish translators begin by acknowledging that "it pleased not God that there should be any further note of her life, doings, or death in the Scriptures." Then they proceed (professedly) to give the information which it had pleased God to withhold. They assert, that at the time of her death, the apostles were all miraculously brought together, with the exception of Thomas, who did not arrive in time ; that the body was buried in Gethsemane, and that most melodious hymns were sung by the apostles and other holy men, in which the hosts of heaven joined ; that three days afterwards, the apostle Thomas arriving, he desired to see and reverence the body. Therefore they opened the sepulchre, when they found that the body was removed, and only an exceedingly fragrant odour remained. Whereupon they concluded that the

body was “assumed” or received into heaven—a distinction which *they* deemed “most agreeable to the singular privilege of the mother of God ; and therefore celebrated most solemnly the day of her assumption.” The practical inference they drew was, that Mary was to be worshipped ; and accordingly she has been worshipped for many centuries. A number of early names are given by way of attestation of this story ; St. Dionysius, St. Hierotheus, St. Damascene, St. Irenæus, St. Fulgentius, and others ; but it is pretty evident that at least some of these men never wrote any thing like what is ascribed to them, but that the whole was forged in their names hundreds of years after their death.*

It must be added, that into *this* service have been pressed actual perversions of Scripture.

Saint Bonaventure—he was canonized as a saint to be worshipped by Pope Sixtus iv. His works were published at Rome, in 1588, in eight vols. folio,† sanctioned and recommended by Pope Sixtus v. and other ecclesiastical authorities. This saint prepared a Psalter, or book of the Psalms, famous to the present day, in which the word “Lord” is struck out, and “Lady” substituted ; so that not only the devout aspirations of the sweet singer of Israel, but many of his inspired prophecies, are blasphemously applied to the virgin Mary ! The eighth and ninth chapters of Proverbs are likewise so applied : moreover, there is a modern Roman Catholic school-book widely circulated, and so highly esteemed as to be pronounced an “excellent school-book, one single reading of which will convey to the

* Fulke on the Rhemish Testament.

† Dupin, vol. xi. pp. 68, 69.

minds of the ignorant a knowledge of religion with which a whole life spent in the reading of the Bible would never furnish them" !!!* Certainly it teaches, what the Bible does not teach, that "one of the most effectual means for acquiring virtue in youth is devotion to the blessed virgin. It is infallible to such as assiduously employ it, because it affords, at the same time, the *most powerful intercession* in the sight of God for obtaining his favour, and the *most perfect model* for our imitation." Alas, alas ! "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."†

But turning from the fables and inventions of men to the Scriptures of truth, we hear again our Saviour's voice. He says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."‡ "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."§ "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.|| Blessed Jesus, "to whom (else) shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."¶ "Through thee we have access by one Spirit unto the Father;"** and thus "it is good for us to draw near to God."††

* Orthodox Journal, vol. ii. p. 142.

† John xx. 13.

‡ John xv. 13.

§ John xvi. 23.

|| Matt. xi. 28.

¶ John vi. 68.

** Eph. ii. 18.

†† Psal. lxxiii. 28

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHURCH OF ROME—ITS WORSHIP, CONTINUED—
INANIMATE THINGS WORSHIPPED.

It has been justly asked—seeing that the virgin and the saints, to whom prayers are directed to be offered, are not either omnipresent or omniscient—how they can hear the prayers that may arise at once from different parts of the earth; how can they understand and sympathize with, and relieve the wants and sufferings of, their numerous votaries? In reply to this it is said, “How the saints in heaven know the prayers and necessities of such who address themselves to them, whether by the ministry of angels, or in the vision of God, or by some particular revelation, it is no part of his faith,* nor is it much his concern that it should be determined. For his part, he does not doubt but that God, who acquainted the prophets with the knowledge of things that were yet to come many hundred years after, that informed Elisha of the king of Syria’s counsels, though privately resolved on in his bedchamber, and at a distance, (2 Kings vi. 12,) can never want means of

* The Papist’s.

letting the saints know the desires of those who beg their intercession here on earth.”* All this Protestants believe just as firmly as any Papist in the world. But our rule of faith and duty is not what God *can* do—on this there is no question—but what God has been pleased to tell us he *will* do. Show us one clear Scripture statement that a thing *is*, or *shall be*, and we have no right to ask “How can these things be?”† or, “Whereby shall I know this?”‡ The Bible says it, that is enough; we have only to receive it as truth, and act upon it. But when a sentiment or observance is asserted or enjoined upon the mere dictum of a fellow worm, or a company of them ever so numerous and ever so dignified, we have a right, and a duty too, to sift the matter with the nicest scrutiny.

One error serves to bolster up another. Not only does the church of Rome enjoin saint worship, it enjoins also the worship of images and pictures, and ascribes to them miraculous powers, which are brought forward as arguments in favour of worshipping the saints or virgin represented.

The Council of Trent decrees that “images of Christ, of the virgin, and other saints are to be had and retained, especially in churches, and due honour and veneration is to be paid to them;” not, it is explained, that they expect benefit from the images themselves, “but the honour with which they are regarded is referred to those who are represented by them. So that we adore Christ, and venerate the saints whose likenesses they bear, when we kiss them, and uncover our heads in

* Göther’s “Papist misrepresented,” etc., p. 17.

† John iii. 9.

‡ Luke i. 18.

their presence, and prostrate ourselves.”* “Let the bishops teach further, that, by the records of the mysteries of our redemption expressed in pictures or other similitudes, men are instructed and confirmed in those articles of faith which are especially to be remembered and cherished; and that great advantages are derived from all sacred images, not only because the people are thus reminded of the benefits and gifts bestowed upon them by Christ, but also the divine miracles performed by the saints, and their salutary examples are thus placed before the eyes of the faithful,” etc.

The moral influence of these and the like observances may be inferred from the fact, that the holy fathers who framed this decree, deemed it necessary to enjoin in connexion with it, that “all *superstition* be taken away,” “all *base gain* abolished, all *indecenty* avoided, so that images be neither painted nor adorned in a *lascivious manner*; nor the commemorations of the saints, nor visits to relics, be abused to *gluttony and drunkenness*.”† cautions, it would seem, better adapted to theatres, and revels, than to the house and service of God. What is there in this really to distinguish it from the impure and idolatrous rites of heathen worship, the adoption of which by the favoured people of Israel was so peculiarly offensive to God? Is not the homage which the Romish church prescribes to statues, images, and pictures, precisely what is forbidden?‡

* Decree of the Council of Trent. † Ib.

‡ See Exod. xxxii. 7, 8; 1 Kings xii. 26—33; Psa. xcvii. 7; cvi. 35, 36, 39, 40; Hos. xiii. 2; Acts vii. 42, 43; and many other passages.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.”* But the majority of Roman Catholics are not aware that this commandment forms part of the Decalogue. It is omitted in their catechisms.

In connexion with Roman Catholic worship, and with the use of images, pictures, etc., we must not omit to mention the Crucifix, the Agnus Dei, the Scapular, and the Rosary. The crucifix, is a representation of our Lord on the cross. Some are wrought in marble or ivory, some are of gold or silver. Very large ones are exhibited in churches, generally above the altars. Those of a smaller size are placed in houses, especially in rooms appropriated to devotion, and some are so small as to be worn suspended round the neck as a locket. The design is, that a sight of the crucifix may awaken devout recollections of the suffering Saviour, and grateful affections towards him. On this we can but say, our blessed Lord knows our wandering forgetful hearts, and he has been pleased to institute one simple ordinance, for the express purpose of keeping up our grateful and affectionate remembrance of his love and sufferings; and what he has not appointed, we cannot but think, however well intended, leads to superstition and will worship.

The Agnus Dei is a small molten figure, bearing on its face the impression of a lamb and flag. It is

* Exod. xx. 4, 5,

composed of wax, balsam, and chrism, and is blessed and consecrated by the pope, on a particular day in the first year of his pontificate, and every seventh year afterwards. The people who purchase these are taught to believe that they derive spiritual efficacy from the prayers used in blessing them; and that "he who carries about him an *Agnus Dei*, or any particle of it, will be preserved from any attempt of his spiritual or temporal enemies; from the dangers of fire, of water, of storms and tempests, of thunder and lightning, and from a sudden and unprovided death. It puts the devils to flight; succours women in child-bed; takes away the guilt of past sins, and furnishes new grace for the future, that we may be preserved from all adversities and perils, both in life and death, through the cross and merits of the Lamb, who redeemed us and washed us in his blood." * How affecting to see such a tissue of superstition wound up with a just and evangelical sentiment! or rather, how sad to see such a sentiment profaned, to carry down the foregoing mass of superstition and absurdity! We would not indulge in uncharitable reflections upon the religious observances of those who differ from us, but these little images painfully remind us of the "silver shrines of *Diana*," and we cannot but fear that their chief recommendation is the same. "They bring no small gain to the craftsmen," and those who dispose of them defend the trade because "by this craft they have their wealth." †

The scapular is a piece of stuff with the letters I. H. S. on one side, and two hearts on the

* Devotion and Office of the Sacred Heart, etc., p. 375.

† Acts xix. 24—27.

other. It is a sort of collar or tippet, to be worn round the neck in honour of the virgin Mary. There are few Roman Catholics, especially among women, who do not wear one of these spiritual collars. In what way they are connected with devotion it is hard for the uninitiated to imagine, but benefits both spiritual and temporal are supposed to be secured by them. Immense indulgences* are attached to the scapular. Wonderful miracles are attributed to its mediation. It is deemed a protection against the assaults of the devil. It is reported to have preserved the pious, and even the impious, from death ; in the former case flattening a bullet and causing it to fall harmless ; in the latter, buoying up a drunken man who had fallen into a river, and was thus kept floating a whole night, till some fishermen, seeing him in the morning, saved him, wondering at the miracle. "The gospel is not more firmly believed than these tales (says one who has been rescued from the errors of Popery). I believed them myself, I must avow it."†

The rosary is a string of beads (to which the crucifix is generally suspended). It consists of a hundred and fifty small beads, with a large bead to every ten. It is for the purpose of keeping account of the number of prayers uttered. It is said to have been the invention of an Egyptian monk, who had vowed to say three hundred prayers daily. He used common pebbles, dropping one for each prayer. Others improved on the invention, and used costly substances if they could afford to do so.

* To be explained hereafter, see p. 182, etc.

† Confessions of a French Catholic Priest, p. 180.

A certain number of prayers are frequently resolved on by devout persons, or enjoined by way of penance. The small beads are for "Ave Marias, the large for Paternosters (the Lord's prayer). So ten prayers are offered to the virgin for one to the Divine Being. As an Ave Maria is uttered, a small bead is dropped. This is repeated ten times, then comes a large bead to jog the memory; sufficient attention is thus excited to satisfy the conscience of the devotee, and yet no effort, no thought, no feeling are required; the understanding may wander, the heart may be asleep, while the lips with the help of the fingers perform their task, and the performer remains with a comfortable confidence of having added to his good works."* What said our Lord? "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them."†

In treating of the worship of the Roman Catholics, their sacraments must be especially mentioned, as, in one of them more particularly, Divine worship is enjoined and continually offered to material elements, which are eaten and drunk.

A sacrament is an oath, or ceremony of engagement; as for example, the oath of a soldier, to be faithful and obedient to his commander. A religious sacrament is indeed a bond of allegiance to our spiritual Head. It consists of two parts, an outward and visible sign, and a spiritual signification. Like all positive institutions, it derives all its force and virtue from the command of the

* Southey's Vindication of the Church of England, p. 506.

† Matt. vi. 7, 8.

Lawgiver. We search the New Testament, the statute book of the Christian church, and we find that there are two, and only two, ordinances thus instituted and enjoined by Christ. Baptism, wherein water is the sign ; the thing signified is the washing away of sin, and renewal of the soul to a life of holiness. The Lord's supper, wherein the sign is the eating of bread and drinking of wine ; the thing signified is the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, and our partaking thereof by faith.

The early corruption of these simple ordinances has already been noticed.* It only remains to add, that in the church of Rome, growing years have confirmed and aggravated early superstitions. The last general council, that of Trent,† among many unrighteous decrees, pronounces, with anathemas against all who dissent from its assertions, that these sacraments convey grace by their own power, and that they are essential to salvation. "The law of baptism,‡ as established by our Lord, extends to all, insomuch that, unless they are regenerated by the grace of baptism, be their parents Christians or infidels, they are born to eternal misery and everlasting destruction."

The corruptions of the Lord's supper are among the most fearful and soul-destroying errors of the church of Rome. First, *the elements are professedly changed into what they are not*. "This is my body," "This is my blood shed for you," are certainly the words of our Lord in the institution

* Chap. vi. p. 52—59.

† See Council of Trent, 7th session, articles 6, 7, 8 ; and on Baptism, art. 5, 8.

‡ Also Catechism of Council of Trent, p. 171.

of the ordinance, but they are as certainly figurative as when he said, "I am the Door," "I am the Vine," or as when John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Christ, as the real sin-atonement sacrifice, was prefigured and typified by the sacrifice of lambs. Christ is the way of access to God, as a door is the entrance to a house. The spiritual union of believers to Christ is like the natural union of the branches to the vine, from which they receive vitality and nourishment. The bread, according to Christ's appointment, represents, signifies, sets forth, the broken body of Christ, and the wine his precious blood, poured forth for man's redemption.

The value of the significant emblems consists in their having been appointed by Christ as a means of keeping alive in his people a grateful, believing remembrance of his sufferings and death; and they are really beneficial just as far as, and no further than, the faith of the receiver is enabled to look through the sign to the thing signified, and rely on the death of Christ for pardon and life. What was eaten and drunk by the disciples at the first institution was really bread, and really wine, while the body of Christ himself remained unbroken in their presence. And now, when the Lord's supper is celebrated, bread and wine are brought to the communion table, bread and wine are eaten and drunk by the recipients, and bread and wine remain in any surplus portion of the elements. The glorified humanity of Jesus is, with his essential Divinity, enthroned above the skies. His spiritual presence is with the "two or three gathered together

in his name,"* and he is often "known of them in breaking of bread."† This is what evangelical Christians believe, and what they experience in the observance of their Saviour's sacred ordinance. But this is not enough for Papists. They are taught, and made to affirm, that at the moment the priest utters the words of consecration, the elements cease to be bread and wine, and are actually changed into the real body, blood, soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ,‡ which exist in every particle and every drop. This is called *transubstantiation*, or a change of substance. Of every person who does not believe this profane absurdity ; who does not profess to receive the sacrament with the same carnal view that the Jews entertained§ when Christ spoke of himself (not the sacrament) as the living bread which came down from heaven, on which, if a man feeds by faith, he shall live for ever ; every person who presumes to judge by the evidence of his senses—seeing, smelling, handling, tasting—that what were bread and wine before consecration, are bread and wine after consecration ; and who receives them only as instituted signs, desiring by faith to feed upon the true Bread of life—of all such persons the Romish church says, "Let them be accursed : "|| and it was for the denial of this impious doctrine, that many Protestants were put to death in the times of papal ascendancy.

* Matt. xviii. 20.

† Luke xxiv. 35.

‡ Council of Trent, 13th session, chap. iii. ; also Catechism of Council of Trent ; also Mornings with Jesuits, pp. 308—314.

§ John vi. 52.

|| See Canons of Council of Trent, Text Book of Popery, 159—161.

A second error is, that of *worshipping the consecrated elements*. Yes: when the transubstantiating process is supposed to be effected by the words of consecration, and the priest, holding up a small portion of the elements, says, (in Latin of course,) Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, all the people fall down and worship the visible elements, rendering the worship which is due to the true God.*

In Spain, when a priest carries the consecrated "host" to a dying person, he is accompanied by a person with a small bell, at the sound of which, all who hear it are required to fall on their knees, and remain so till it is out of hearing. In the midst of their engagements, of whatever kind, this professed homage must be rendered. Even in the theatre, when the tinkling bell is heard to pass, "God! God!" resounds through the house, the actors and spectators all fall down on their knees for a short space, then rise and resume their amusement. If this be not taking the name of God in vain, as well as giving his glory to that which is no God, it will be hard to find instances of those transgressions. How fitly does the cutting sarcasm against idol worship, Isa. xliv. 10—20, apply to this species of idolatry! It is remarkable, however, that this is the only idolatrous practice in the church of Rome, for which no counterpart is found in the ceremonies of heathenism. Even a heathen could say that no man could be guilty of such absurdity as to imagine that he *ate his god!*†

* See Roman Missal; Breviary, etc.; Ordinary of the Mass, p. 33; Council of Trent; Text Book, 154.

† Cicero.

Roman Catholic manuals of devotion contain forms of prayer and a litany* consisting of forty epithets addressed to the host, at the recitation of each of which the people say, "Have mercy upon us." There is also an annual festival for the especial adoration of the host, which is carried about the streets in procession. The streets and houses are splendidly decorated, and all is joy and festivity. This is called "God's feast," or the "Feast of Corpus Christi."

A third error is, that *the mass* is offered as *a real sacrifice to God*, and received as *a real atonement*. "Whoever shall say that a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God in the mass, let him be accursed."† "The mass," says Dr. Chalonier, "consists in the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and the offering up of the same body and blood to God by the ministry of the priest." How contrary to the express testimony of Scripture! "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."‡

The sacrament administered to a dying person is "called the Viaticum, because it prepares for us a passage to eternal happiness and glory." "Jesus said, I am the way."§ Which shall be believed and relied on? It is a matter of infinite moment.

Several abuses both in the elements and the administration must be glanced at.

* Protestant, vol. ii. pp. 75—80.

† Council of Trent. ‡ Heb. x. 12, 14; ix. 25—28.

§ John xiv. 6.

1. Christ in instituting the ordinance "*broke bread.*" Instead of common bread broken up and divided among the communicants, a wafer is substituted, composed of flour boiled in a small quantity of water to the consistence of wax, then pressed thin and cut in small rounds, each having the letters I. H. S., or a figure of Christ.

2. Christ put the bread into the hands of the disciples, saying, "*Take, eat.*" The priest lays the wafer on the tongue of the communicant, who is not allowed to touch it with his fingers.

3. Christ took *wine*. Papists use wine mingled with water.

4. Christ said, "Drink *ye all* of it,"* "and *they all* drank of it." The Romish church forbids the cup to the laity, and confines it to the priests. These are some of the ways in which Popery corrupts the ordinances given by Christ to his church.

Besides this, the church of Rome has set up five sacraments more, and, according to its usual custom, having thought fit that there should be seven, pronounces all accursed who presume to think that there are more or less than seven. The additional five are, confirmation, penance, extreme unction, orders, and matrimony. Of these, two only require any distinct notice here, namely, penance and extreme unction.

In addition to the general error of appointing as sacraments any observance whatever which Jesus Christ, the true Head of the church, has not so appointed, *penance* begins by assuming a special error, namely, that in and by baptism all sin is necessarily removed, and regeneration truly

* Matt. xxvi. 27 ; Mark xiv. 23 ; 1 Cor. xi. 25, 26.

effected ; and if, says the Council of Trent, “in all the regenerate there were such gratitude to God, that they always kept the righteousness received by his goodness and grace in baptism, there would have been no need to institute another sacrament for the remission of sins besides baptism.”* Mark, reader, how every invention of man in matters of religion goes to turn aside the attention from Christ, the only and the all-sufficient Saviour. First, they imagine that baptism remits all their sins ; then, that if they sin after baptism, penance is at hand to do the same good office ; they are then to be “placed as offenders before the tribunal of penance, that they may be absolved by the sentence of the priests, not once only, but as often as they penitently flee thereto, confessing their sins.”† “Our sins are forgiven us by the absolution of the priest. The voice of the priest, who is legitimately constituted a minister for the remission of sins, is to be heard as that of Christ himself.” “The absolution of the priest, which is expressed in words, seals the remission of sins which it accomplishes on the soul.” “There is no sin however grievous, no crime however enormous, which penance does not remit.” “Without the intervention of penance, we cannot obtain or even hope for pardon.”‡

In order to receiving this priestly absolution, *confession* is required. Confession of sin is a duty enjoined in Scripture. It is opposed alike to artful concealment and to proud self-justification. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso

* Council of Trent, 14th Session, chap. i.

† Ib. chap. ii.

‡ Catechism of Council of Trent.

confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”*
 “I acknowledged my sins unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”† “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”‡ “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another.”§

From all these and other passages of Scripture we clearly infer, that confession of sin to God should be constant and unreserved; that if injury have been inflicted on any particular person, it is a duty frankly to acknowledge the offence to that person, to seek his forgiveness,|| and, as far as possible, to make restitution. In case of open transgression by which scandal is brought upon the church, the confession should be as open, and the evidences of repentance as evident, as the sin was public.¶

It may be added, that private conference with a judicious Christian friend or minister may be useful to one harassed by temptation, or burdened by a sense of guilt, as a means of directing him at once to the “fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness,”** and affording encouragement by convincing the trembling penitent, who is ready to suppose his case singular, that his experience is common to man, and that “God is faithful, who

* Prov. xxviii. 13.

† Psa. xxxii. 5.

‡ 1 John i. 8, 9.

§ James v. 16.

|| Matt. v. 23, 24.

¶ 1 Tim. v. 20.

** Zech. xiii. 1.

will not suffer him to be tempted above that he is able,"* and by reminding him of the assurance—"My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."†

But the confession required by Popery is altogether different from any of these. It is private confession to the priest, and is called auricular confession, because it is whispered in his ear. Then there is a sort of catechetical examination founded on the decalogue, in which each commandment is branched out into a number of particulars, and the penitent is required to state whether he has broken them, under what circumstances, and how often. When the list has been gone through, the penitent is taught to say, "For these and all other my sins which I cannot at this present call to remembrance, I am heartily sorry, purpose amendment for the future, and most humbly ask pardon of God, and penance and absolution of you, my ghostly father. Therefore I beseech the blessed Mary, ever virgin, blessed Michael the archangel, blessed John Baptist, and the holy apostles Peter and Paul, all the saints, and you, father, to pray to our Lord God for me."‡ Then follows the priestly absolution.

In addition to the grand fact of "the sacrament of penance" wanting Scripture foundation, it may be observed, 1. That the confession prescribed, that of going over the detail of sins in the ear of a fellow creature, must have a tendency to pollute, rather than to purify the mind. It is in imagination going over the sins again. 2. That

* 1 Cor. x. 13.

† 2 Cor. xii. 9.

‡ Garden of the Soul.

the particular questions proposed have a tendency to awaken thoughts of evil which otherwise might never have entered the mind. 3. That the peculiar circumstances of the confessional, the secrecy, the close familiarity between the confessor and his penitent, the secret of silence as to every thing that passes there, all form temptations to evil. It would be easy to fill many pages with proofs that these are not merely conjectures of the tendency of the practice, but examples, very much moderated, of facts that commonly do result from it.* Its influence is in every respect awfully demoralizing. 4. Angels, and saints, and the priest, are sought to as mediators for pardon, but the true Mediator and his work are lost sight of.

Oh how differently did the apostles deal with penitents! "My little children, these things I write unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."† How different the declarations of Jehovah himself—"I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more."‡

One thing more remains to be noticed in popish penance. The penitent must render "*satisfaction*;" not in the sense of restitution to an injured fellow creature, but something *meritorious*, something that shall "efface the stain of his sins," "act as a

* See Romanism as it Rules in Ireland, vol. ii. p. 136.

† 1 John ii. 1; i. 7. ‡ Isa. xliii. 25; Heb. viii. 12.

punishment and affliction for past sins,"* "disarm the vengeance of God," and prevent punishments decreed against the sinner.†

These "punishments" or "satisfactions" are imposed by the priest, who is to enjoin them "according to the nature of the offence and the capability of the offender." "God we appease by prayer ; our neighbour we satisfy by alms ; and ourselves we chastise by fasting." There is an almost endless variety of these punishments, from the saying so many Ave Marias and Paternosters, to enduring all manner of self-inflicted hardships and sufferings, or to the giving away worldly property for the benefit of "the church," even to the impoverishment of the penitent and his family. In this way the church has amassed vast riches, by her priests "creeping into houses and leading captive silly women" and foolish men ; and in the ordinary books of devotion and lives of the saints, people are held up as mirrors of sanctity for having stripped their families to enrich the church ; or having, in defiance of the natural law of self-preservation, almost starved themselves to death, worn hair shirts, iron chains, belts stuck with needles ; lashed themselves with scourges, rolled among nettles or thorns, slept upon a bed made of the rough branches of a tree, stuck with pieces of broken pottery, etc., etc. ; and these fooleries are represented as methods of satisfaction for sin, and of high attainment in holiness ! But it is more congenial to fallen man to come before the Lord with calves, or rams, or rivers of oil ; to give even

* Council of Trent.

† Catechism of Council of Trent.

the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul, than to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.* If the priest enjoins "some great thing," some costly sacrifice, or cruel infliction, the devotee willingly submits to it; but to "wash and be clean,"† to "believe and be saved," are too simple and too humbling and sin-rejecting for the pride and lusts of human nature.

"Too many, shock'd at what should charm them most,
Despise the plain direction and are lost.
'Heaven on such terms!' they cry with proud disdain,
'Incredible, impossible, and vain!'
Rebel, because 'tis easy to obey,
And scorn, for its own sake, the gracious way."

As to the sacrament of "*extreme unction*," the use of it is confined to persons supposed to be dying. Its element or matter is oil of olives, consecrated by the hands of the bishop. No other oil has any efficacy. It is to be applied by the hands of the priest, not to the entire body, but to each of the organs of sense. At each anointing the priest says, "By this holy unction, and through his great mercy, may God indulge thee whatever sins thou hast committed by sight" (or smell, or touch, as the case may be). "The grace of this sacrament *remits sins*, especially lighter offences, or, as they are commonly called, venial sins. Its primary object is not to remit mortal sins. For this the sacrament of penance was instituted; as was that of baptism for the remission of original sin."‡ It appears, then, the Papist is taught to believe that baptism remits original sin, penance great sins

* Micah vi. 6—8.

† 2 Kings v. 13.

‡ Catechism, Council of Trent, 296—301.

after baptism, and unction little sins. What room remains for the Redeemer's work, or for the blood that cleanseth from *all* sins? Surely the cross of Christ is made of none effect by these traditions.

The alleged basis of this practice is a perverted view of the precept of the apostle James.* Anointing with oil is a common practice in hot countries. It certainly has a medicinal use, and is often resorted to as a remedy for the plague. It was also sometimes used as significant of power imparted for miraculous healing.† The apostle James directs its use with this view—to the recovery of the sick in answer to the prayer of faith. This is very different from sending for a priest to anoint a dying person in order to his safe and happy death. The priest never anoints a person until he is considered past recovery, and so far from expecting to raise him up, it is well known that if the person so far recovers as to set his foot upon the ground, the anointing goes for nothing. The following simple fact is in full accordance with a general feeling among ignorant people. A young girl, supposed to be about to die, received extreme unction. Several hours afterwards, the writer, in company with another person, called to take her some nourishment. The poor girl lay quite still, moving only her parched lips, and raising a most imploring eye as if to beg for some refreshment. It was with the utmost difficulty that the mother could be brought to allow her lips to be moistened. She said it was “improper” to give her any thing after “the

* James v. 14, 15.

† Mark vi. 13.

blessed priest's unction." When however the restriction had been broken through, maternal feeling prevailed over superstition. Opening a cupboard and pointing to a phial, she timidly said, "Perhaps ye'd venture to give her the doctor's stuff?" The suggestion was readily adopted, the medicine administered, the face and hands sponged, the pillow shaken up, and the poor girl fell into a tranquil sleep, and ultimately recovered. Will it be believed that the gladness of the parents was damped by a superstitious dread, that "poor Biddy was not raised up for good?" "They feared she would not come to so blessed an end as if she had been let go when all was ready." The writer has often seen poor Biddy as a decent respectable married woman and mother of a family, and she is probably living to the present day.

The spiritual effects of this pretended sacrament are well described. "All will confess the vast importance of right views and feelings in the prospect of death. Perilous as is deception or delusion in spiritual things at any time, the danger is immeasurably increased when the last change is fast approaching, and the final destiny is about to be sealed for ever. It is thus that the church of Rome 'lays the flattering unction to the soul.' The dying man sends for the priest, and makes confession; absolution is promptly bestowed; the eucharist is administered; and lastly, the sacred chrism is applied. These are the credentials of pardon, the passports to heaven. No attempt is made to investigate the state of the heart, detect false hopes, bring the character to the infallible standard; nothing is said of the atonement of Christ, and the sanctifying influences of the Holy

Spirit. Without repentance, without faith, without holiness, the departing soul feels happy and secure, and is not undeceived until eternity discloses its dreadful realities—and then it is too late. It is not affirmed, indeed, that this description is universally applicable, but that, with regard to a large majority of instances, it is a fair statement of facts, cannot, alas, be questioned.”*

Most justly has it been said in a recent publication—“The standing evidence of the fall of man, the ‘irreparable reproach’ of his intellect and his heart, has ever been the sin of idolatry. For this, no shapeless logs, no grotesque images are necessary. Its essential virus consists in that debasing tendency to materialize spiritual things, under the influence of which *any thing* is interposed between the Creator and the worshipping mind of the creature.” “Whether the substituted creature be the reptile of Egypt or the monster of the East ; the virgin, the angel, or the saint ; the eucharistic element, or the laver of baptism ; or even the ideal chain of pontifical succession, and the equally ideal influence transmitted along with it ; in each and all cases the substitution itself is destructive of all religion both in its theory and its operation, and that antagonism is perhaps less malignant in the coarser forms of barbarism, than in the more soul-pervading refinement of modern superstition. The principle of corruption alike of doctrine and worship is, in one word, the substitution of *any thing* in the place of the truth of Scripture, and the free grace of God, in whatever concerns the spiritual interests of man.”†

* Text Book of Popery, p. 202.

† Eclectic Review, Dec. 1850, pp. 740, 750.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHURCH OF ROME—ERRONEOUS DOCTRINES.

MANY doctrines at variance with the teachings of the unerring word of God, have necessarily been referred to in the foregoing pages. It is important to give a somewhat more distinct statement of some leading errors in doctrine, which are the foundation and source of the practical evils that have been pointed out, and of many others. It has been given as a good test of doctrine, and though the exact phrase is not to be found in Scripture, the sentiment expressed is fully borne out by the whole tenor of Scripture. All sound doctrine tends "to humble the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, and to promote holiness." Let us bring some doctrines of Popery to this test.

1. Popery maintains the doctrine of *human merit*. That a man's prayers, alms, and mortifications are meritorious, and can remove his sins, and, as it were, blot out his debts, and turn the balance in his favour; that the good works of a righteous man "may be considered as fully satisfying the Divine law." "It is the common opinion of all Catholics, that the good works of the just are truly and properly merits, deserving eternal

life itself.”* “Whoever shall affirm that men are justified solely by the righteousness of Christ,” “that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the Divine mercy, by which sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake ; or that it is that confidence only by which we are justified,—let him be accursed.”† “Whosoever shall affirm that the good works of a justified man are in such sense the gifts of God, that they are not also his (man’s) *worthy merits* ; or that he being justified by his good works, which are wrought by him through the grace of God and the merits of Jesus Christ, of whom he is a living member, does not *really deserve* increase of grace, eternal life, the enjoyment of eternal life, if he dies in a state of grace, and even increase of glory,—let him be accursed.” Thus “faith is made void,” the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ is transformed into a mere stepping-stone for human merit ; and men are taught to look rather to themselves than to the Saviour, and to rely on their own doings, to the exclusion, or at least the depreciation, of his all-glorious righteousness.

The corrupt church carries her notions of human merit further still, and asserts that a righteous man may even accumulate a surplus store of good works, over and above what is required on his own account,‡ and that these he may convey into the hands of the church, (that is, the clergy,) or rather that they are so conveyed, and that they form a

* Cardinal Bellarmine, Treatise on Justification.

† Council of Trent, Sixth Session, chap. xvi. canons 11, 12, 32.

‡ See Mornings with Jesuits, pp. 278—281.

treasury to assist in making up the deficiencies of some poor sinner, on whom the clergy have the power of bestowing them. This fund of merit will be noticed under the next doctrine. It is an obvious and affecting fact, that the church of Rome has degenerated because the great doctrine of justification by faith in the Saviour has been taken from her. We delight to believe that there have been, even in that corrupt communion, multitudes of hidden ones who, fixing on the fragments of truth presented, have received Christ to the salvation of their souls; but the church, as a church, has indeed fallen from grace; and the only successful attempts to renovate it have been, and ever must be, made by restoring that life-giving doctrine. Tindal, the Bible translator (and martyr), in his prologue to the Epistle to the Romans, thus writes: "The sum and whole cause of writing this Epistle is to prove that a man is justified by faith only: which proposition whoso denieth, to him is not only this epistle and all that Paul writeth, but also the whole Scripture, so locked up, that he shall never understand it to his soul's health." "As soon as this fundamental truth should be re-established in Christendom, all the errors and observances that had taken place, all that multitude of saints, works, penances, masses, indulgences, etc., would disappear. As soon as the one Mediator and his only sacrifice were acknowledged, all other mediators and sacrificers would vanish. The article of justification," says a man whom we may consider enlightened in the matter,*

* Luther to Br ntius.

“ is what creates the church, nourishes it, edifies it, preserves and defends it. No one can teach worthily in the church, or oppose an enemy with success, if he does not adhere to the truth. This (in allusion to the earliest prophecy) is the heel that shall bruise the head of the serpent.”

What saith the Scripture? “ A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” “ By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.” “ Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.” “ All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus : whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.”* “ Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes ye were healed.”†

“ Of *all* that wisdom dictates, this the drift,
That man is dead in sin, and life a gift.”

The doctrine of human merit degrades the Saviour, exalts the sinner, and promotes pride instead of holiness.

A second doctrine, equally objectionable, is that of *indulgences*. Of this it is not easy to form a clear and correct idea. It is a subject on which Romanists often complain that their views are misrepresented. They tell us that it is not this, and it is not that, but they do not clearly tell us what it is. We ought to defend truth and oppose error only

* Rom. iii. 19—28.

† 1 Pet. ii. 24.

by truth, and truth spoken in love ; and we would carefully avoid misrepresentation and exaggeration. The authorized statements of Papists themselves bear us out in saying, (1.) That it is a received maxim with them, that, when sin is forgiven, though the guilt and eternal punishment thereof are wholly remitted, there always remains some temporal punishment to be endured on account of it ; “lest,” says Dr. Milner, “the easiness of his pardon should make him careless about relapsing into sin.”* (2.) Satisfaction must be made for this, either in this life or the next. (3.) That fasts, alms, penances, and other meritorious works, have power in some degree to make this satisfaction. (4.) But they are in most cases insufficient wholly to effect it. (5.) A provision, however, is made for the purpose, the pope having in his hands an immense treasure of unapplied merit, partly the Saviour’s, and partly arising from supererogatory works, (or works above the requirements of duty,) performed by the saints now in glory. (6.) The pope has the power of granting from this fund, upon such terms and conditions as he may choose to prescribe, a sufficient portion to remit the temporal punishment due to any individual. This remission is called an indulgence. It may be only for a limited time, or for the punishment due for some particular offence ; or it may be “full,” “plenary,” releasing the sinner from all the pains and penalties incurred by him up to the time of receiving the boon. The French Catechism, to which are prefixed the pope’s bull, and the archbishop’s

* End of Religious Controversy, pp. 304, 305.

mandamus, or authoritative command for its use, thus explains the doctrine of indulgences:—"The church has received from Jesus Christ the power of granting them, and the use of them is very salutary to Christians. Q. Why are indulgences so salutary? A. Because they are established to moderate the rigours of the temporal pains due to sin. Q. Is it necessary to know precisely how this rigour is moderated? A. No: it is sufficient to believe that a good mother, like the church, gives nothing to her children but what really serves to relieve them, in this world or the next. Q. Is it the intention of the church by indulgences to free us from the obligation of God? A. No: the mind of the church is, on the contrary, to grant indulgences only to those who on their part attend to the *duty of satisfying the Divine justice*. Q. Of what use are indulgences? A. They are of much use to us in every way; since we have always reason to believe that we are very far from having satisfied according to our obligations. Q. What follows from hence? A. That we should be our own enemies, if we had not recourse to the graces and indulgences of the church. Q. What then, in a word, is the intention of the church in the dispensation of indulgences? A. It is to assist well-meaning Christians to clear themselves in regard to God, and make up their infirmity. Q. What does she intend by that? A. To *excite more and more in the heart piety and love to God*, conformably to the word of the Lord, He to whom much is given ought also to love much. Q. What is the best disposition in which to obtain indulgences? A. Doing in the best manner we can

what is prescribed to obtain them, and wait the effect of them from the mercy of God, who alone knows the secrets of the heart. Q. On what are indulgences founded? A. On the satisfaction of Jesus Christ *and the saints*. Q. Why do you add the satisfaction of the saints to that of Jesus Christ? A. Because of the goodness of God, who is willing, on the behalf of his most pious servants, to forgive the others. Q. Why besides? A. Because the satisfaction of the saints is united to that of Jesus Christ, whence it derives all its value. Q. Who has a right to give indulgences? A. The pope in the whole church, and the bishops in their dioceses, with the limitations appointed by the church." This doctrine *does not* exalt the Saviour, for it represents his work as incomplete, that he has redeemed from punishment, not wholly, but only in part; and it adds human merit to make out the supposed deficiency. It *does not* humble the sinner, for it teaches him first to try to satisfy Divine justice himself, then to apply for the merit of the saints and the indulgence of the church to help him, and leaves him very little room to entertain a sense of his need of Christ. It *does not* promote holiness, because, (1.) It teaches people to be satisfied with low degrees of piety in themselves, seeing they can draw upon the merits of the "most pious" of their fellow creatures. (2.) It suggests, as means for the promotion of piety, what God has not appointed, and on which his blessing cannot be expected to rest. It indeed proposes means altogether opposed to the word of God. The example adduced, that of our Lord saying, he to

whom much is forgiven will love much,* referred to free and full forgiveness ; not to remission of sins partly given by God, partly wrought out by the sinner himself, and partly begged from the saints. (3.) It inculcates good works (or supposed good works) on motives of pride, self-exaltation, and interest ; men fast, or pray, or give alms, not as the genuine fruit of love and grace, but that they may raise a fund of superabundant merit, for their own benefit or that of others ; in fact, by asserting that men *can* do more than their duty, it lowers the standard of duty to the corrupt taste of man, and in every sense opposes real holiness.

It remains to notice on what terms indulgences are dispensed. These terms vary according to times and circumstances. About the end of the tenth century, and beginning of the eleventh, the cruel penances inflicted by the clergy had become almost intolerable.† The people groaned under their priestly oppressors, yet dared not resist their cruel impositions. The priests, however, found out that unless the grievances of the people were in some way redressed, the power of the priests would fail. Then the system of indulgences was invented. They said to their penitents, “ You cannot accomplish the tasks imposed on you. Well ! we, the priests of God, and your pastors, will take this heavy burden upon ourselves. For a seven weeks’ fast you shall pay twenty-pence, if you are rich ; ten, if less wealthy ; and three-pence if you

* Luke vii. 40—50.

† Such as those referred to under the article Penance, p. 174.

are poor; and so on for other matters. Courageous men raised their voices against this traffic, but in vain." The popes soon discovered what advantages could be derived from these indulgences. They saw that the inferior rulers of the church were accumulating immense treasures by the sale of indulgences, and resolved to take the dispensing of them into their own hands. Then the fiction was invented of the reserved fund of merit placed at the disposal of the pope. A settled merchandise was established at Rome; and when any special occasion arose for replenishing the coffers of the church, a full remission was proclaimed to all who chose to accept of it—in other words, to pay for it. A centenary jubilee was appointed, and first celebrated in the year 1300,* under the popedom of Boniface VIII. The interval was afterwards shortened, first to fifty years, and finally to twenty-five years. The last year (1850) was a jubilee year in the papal church, during which full remission was offered to all who would visit Rome, and perform certain services. Indulgences are often published in order to the obtaining money to accomplish some favourite object. "It may be the building a church, or the founding a convent, the establishing a hospital, or supporting a school, the frequenting some special altar, or praying to some particular saint, attending some foolish ceremony, or joining in some senseless superstition, worshipping some favoured image, or praying to some miraculous picture. Whatever it be, it is easily, or at least more easily, accomplished by an issue of indulgences

* Dupin, vol. xii. p. 4.

annexed to its performances. Such is the modern system. In more ancient times indulgences were ceded to those who, as pilgrims, visited the holy sepulchre at Jerusalem ; to those who, as champions of the cross, took arms and joined in the crusades for the possession of the Holy Land ; to those who promoted the building of St. Peter's at Rome, which was done by advancing money for that purpose ;* to those who took up arms for the persecution of the Protestants and extirpation of heresy ; and, in the end, though perhaps it was only the abuse of the system, to all who were able and willing to purchase them.”†

“ It is not asserted that the Romish church actually gives licence to sin, yet it cannot be denied that the doctrine of indulgences, so far from repressing evil, powerfully tends to blunt the moral sense, and encourage the sinner in his vicious courses.” Absolution for such crimes as the pope alone professes to forgive (which are called reserved cases) has a fixed price in the Roman chancery. The pope's pardon is to be had for money—is not to be had without it. The “ Tax book of the Roman chancery ” has been frequently published, much to the annoyance of popes and priests.‡ But it cannot be wholly suppressed.

Such is the doctrine of Popery. The doctrine of the Bible is, “ The wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” “ What shall we say then ? Shall we

* It was a common saying, that St. Peter's church was built by the sins of the people.

† Mornings with Jesuits, pp. 385, 386.

‡ See Text Book, p. 342.

continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Being now made free from sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”*

It may be remembered that the shameless sale of indulgences in the sixteenth century was the immediate occasion of arousing Luther's open opposition to the corrupt church. This was in 1517. The Council of Trent, which was held a few years later, fully confirmed the doctrine; defending it with the usual anathemas. But on account of the “abuses that had crept in, by reason of which this honourable name of indulgences was blasphemed by the heretics,” the council directed that “all wicked gains accruing from them should be wholly abolished.” Popes and priests have never deemed *their* gains *wicked*. So the practice has gone on to the present day; as lately as 1844, a book was published at Rome, by authority, entitled, “A collection of prayers and pious works, to which are attached the sacred indulgences.” Still more recently a Novena (or nine days' service) was appointed expressly to pray for the conversion of England to Popery—great indulgences being promised to all who should attend the services.†

This doctrine forms an important source of papal revenue, and a prime support of the superstitions of the church of Rome. It should be observed that indulgences are, by Dr. Wiseman, traced back to the practice of the martyrs ‡ giving letters of

* Rom. vi. 23, 1, 2, 22.

† See Mornings with Jesuits, pp. 359—375.

‡ See p. 66.

recommendation to the church on behalf of those who had lapsed ; in regard to which the lapsed persons were received back into communion and absolved from the remainder of their penance.

Intimately connected with the doctrine of indulgences is that of *purgatory*. A confused idea was early entertained,* that the happiness of departed spirits was not complete, and prayers were offered on their behalf, either for their tranquil repose in Abraham's bosom, or for their being permitted to have part in the first resurrection. This notion was founded on a misinterpretation of some hints in Scripture,† which, however, afford no real ground for it, while there are many explicit declarations of Scripture which altogether condemn it. One thing may safely be affirmed, that, whatever erroneous views the early Christians might entertain of the state of their departed friends, they never imagined them to be in a place of torment. All error is progressive. It has already been shown that praying for the dead led to praying to them. At a later period it ripened into the full doctrine of purgatory, which the Romish catechisms thus state—that the souls of believers are exposed to a state of suffering after death ; that by the enduring of that suffering they make satisfaction to the justice of God for their sins ; and that the duration and extent of their sufferings may be mitigated by prayers and alms offered for them, and particularly by the sacrifice of the mass.‡

* See chap. vi. p. 64. † Luke xvi. 22 ; Rev. xx. 6.

‡ See Catechism on Pope Pius's Creed.

Romanists have often tauntingly asked Protestants, Where was your religion before Luther? To which the answer has been, "In the Bible." "But if we ask them where was purgatory taught before the time of Gregory the Great (A. D. 590)? they can give no other answer than that 'it was contained in the writings of heathen poets and philosophers.' And, indeed, Cardinal Bellarmine finds an argument for purgatory on this very circumstance."* Apocryphal texts were afterwards brought forward to corroborate a doctrine which it was determined should be believed, especially 2 Maccabees xii. 42—45; but there seems no doubt whatever that the doctrine had its origin in the fictions of heathenism, and that this origin has been avowed by its leading advocates.

About the end of the sixth century, Pope Gregory gave countenance to the doctrine, which rapidly spread; especially when fictitious miracles and visions were employed to establish and give currency to any doctrine that promised to gratify the priests in their leading principles—the love of gain or the love of power. Let it be repeated, this was not at any time the character of *all* the priests. Some, with all their disadvantages, were conscientious, and mourned over the corruptions of the church. These were not the men who either mooted doctrines from corrupt motives, or supported them by false testimony.

In the 12th century, "some affirmed," but many doubted, "that there is in hell a place of purgatory, wherein such as are to be saved are either only

* Elliott, p. 281.

troubled with darkness, or decocted with the fire of expiation.”* In 1439, at the Council of Florence, the doctrine was recognised, and has ever since been considered an article of faith. The Council of Trent confirmed and expounded it with the usual anathemas against all who should doubt. It has however been affirmed, that many of the clergy believe it no more than a celebrated cardinal, who pleasantly asked his chaplain, “How many masses would it take to fetch a soul out of purgatory?” The chaplain being unable to answer, the cardinal himself solved the difficulty—“Just so many as it would take of snow-balls to heat an oven.” This shrewd decision would provoke a smile, if we could divest it of the awful hypocrisy of a man, for filthy lucre’s sake, teaching what he did not believe, and leading the souls of men to error and destruction.

Cardinal Bellarmine, one of the most celebrated writers among the Romanists, and who is continually appealed to as an authority, in his treatise on purgatory, states that it is “that place in which, after death, the souls of those persons are purified who were not fully cleansed on earth, in order that they may be prepared for heaven,”† and that “the punishment they endure is fire, corporeal fire.”‡ How fire can act on an incorporeal spirit, cannot be understood upon earth. All that can be known in this state is, that the pains of purification are so horribly severe, that no sufferings ever borne in this world can be compared with them. How long they continue is not certain, but it is thought the

* Dupin, vol. xiii. p. 43.

† Treatise on Purgatory, book i. chap. 1.

‡ Ib. book ii. chap. 14.

process is very gradual, and that some will not be thoroughly cleansed till the day of judgment.

The application of this horrible doctrine is, that seeing the sufferings of the souls in purgatory may be relieved and shortened by the prayers, alms, and offerings of their friends on earth, and especially by masses said by the priests, all faithful, pious, and tender-hearted Romanists should show their love and compassion for their departed friends by paying liberally for masses and indulgences for their redemption from purgatory; or if they have no particular object of compassion, that they should exercise their charity on behalf of the sufferers in general.

Self-love, too, is called into operation, for many indulgences are purchased and bestowed prospectively for the benefit of the person purchasing them. Many Romanists, believing this fiction, are laying up a store of indulgences, which they expect will effect their speedy release from purgatory; and many who have not exercised such forethought, when the terrors of death are in immediate prospect, are easily induced to "give large money," or to bequeath estates or property of any kind, for masses to be said on their behalf. The term of indulgence which may be purchased often extends to many years, in some instances to many thousand years, and by the price paid by poor trembling sinners or their sympathizing friends, the coffers of Rome have been enriched to a degree surpassing the possessions of wealthy monarchs.

There are purgatorian societies established, as every one at all acquainted with the Roman Catholics in Ireland must be well aware, much on

the plan of ordinary benefit societies, contributions being paid on their own behalf, by beneficiary members, who insure, according to the amount of their contribution, masses to be said immediately on their departure, and at certain intervals afterwards, *provided* however that they die a natural death, have been six months member of the institution, and be clear of all dues at the time of their departure.* Honorary or charitable subscribers are also invited to contribute, and do contribute largely for the relief of the poor. Oh that all the money thus bestowed on mercenary priests were employed in feeding and clothing, and every way bettering the condition of the poor while living, and especially in circulating among them that holy Book, which would direct them to real blessings of inestimable value, immediate attainment, and which they are invited to receive, without money and without price ! † It is one characteristic of the religion of Jesus, that “the poor have the gospel preached to them,” ‡ but the church of Rome has no gospel for the poor—“No penny, no Pater noster.” No benefit is conferred freely, however easily it may be rendered by the priest, and however important it is represented to the poor man ; if he cannot pay for it he must go without it. Can this be the religion of Jesus, or have any affinity to it ? Can the priests of Rome be the true successors of the apostle Peter, who said to a poor sufferer, “Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk ?” §

* Popular Romanism examined, pp. 76—82.

† Isa. lv. 1—3 ; Rev. xxii. 17. ‡ Matt. xi. 5. § Acts iii. 6.

This doctrine, like the others, exalts the sinner in pride, as able to purchase his own redemption; it degrades the Saviour, as *not* "saving to the uttermost;" it deludes men with false hopes, and leads them to neglect or defer the concerns of their soul, by flattering themselves that what with the prayers of the priest, and their own offerings, and those of their friends for them, they shall do very well at last.

Now what does the Bible teach us? That the dead have no more "a portion in any thing that is done under the sun." Nothing can be done to help them, therefore we should do all the good in our power while our friends live and we live. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."* The Bible tells us, that "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever."† There is no middle state, no after passage. No sooner has death done his office, than Lazarus is in heaven, and the rich man in hell, and a great gulf between them.‡ The Bible tells us, too, this comfortable truth, that "there is now *no* condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."§ For them "to live is Christ, and to die is gain."|| They depart "to be with Christ, which is far better."¶ "Ab-

* Eccles. ix. 6, 10.

† Psa. xlix. 6—8.

‡ Luke xvi. 22, 23, 26.

§ Rom. viii. 1.

|| Phil. i. 21.

¶ Phil. i. 23.

sent from the body," they are "present with the Lord."* The very day of their departure from the body they are "with Christ in paradise."† A voice from heaven said, "Write"—the apostle John wrote it, and all the power of Rome cannot blot it out—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may *rest* from their labours; and their works do follow them."‡

Another evil doctrine of Popery is the preference put upon *celibacy* above marriage; marriage being forbidden to all the clergy of the church of Rome of every degree. This was authoritatively settled in the eleventh century. Vows of celibacy voluntarily taken by persons of either sex, are considered highly meritorious, and *they* are distinguished by the epithet of "the religious," as if they had a monopoly of religion. This preference is altogether opposed to Scripture, and to the wise and merciful appointments of a holy God." "Blessed are the *pure in heart*, for they shall see God;"§ but nothing in Scripture intimates that that purity is restricted or confined to any particular state or relationship. Jesus manifested his approbation of the state of marriage, by beginning to show forth his glory, and performing his first public miracle, at a marriage feast.|| Several of the apostles, including Peter, we know were married, and continued after their apostleship to live with their wives, and take them with them when they went from place to place to preach the gospel.¶ The apostle Paul also maintained his full

* 2 Cor. v. 8.

† Luke xxiii. 43.

‡ Rev. xiv. 13.

§ Matt. v. 8.

|| John ii. 1—11.

¶ 1 Cor. ix. 5, 6.

right to do the same if he chose. In the Epistles, marriage is repeatedly mentioned with honour,* the duties of married persons to each other are pointed out, and the conjugal relation is spoken of as an emblem of that subsisting between Christ and his church. Particular rules are laid down as to the character of the wives of both bishops and deacons;† and it is given as one characteristic feature of the great apostasy, that marriage would be forbidden.‡ “Christianity rejects and discountenances the doctrine which attaches the idea of merit or purity to a single life, the ‘forbidding to marry’ being mentioned among the heresies which should be brought into the church. Of this prediction the virtue attributed by the Romish church to the vow of celibacy and monasticism is a precise fulfilment.”

The wretchedness which this doctrine has entailed on thousands of its victims, and the vice into which it has plunged thousands more, are too palpably known to require proof, and too offensive to be noticed here with more than a passing allusion. As the blessing of God is uniformly connected with sincere obedience to his revealed will, his curse seems to rest upon every proud self-righteous attempt to be wise above what is written, or holy above what is commanded.

The last doctrine that need be distinctly mentioned, is that which pervades the whole system of Popery—the *priest* does all.

Whatever be the character of the pope, he is to

* Heb. xiii. 4; Eph. v. 22—33; Col. iii. 18, 19; 1 Pet. iii. 1—7.

† 1 Tim. iii. 2—5, 11, 12; Tit. i. 6.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 3.

be believed and obeyed, even to the contradicting of common sense and confounding of good and evil, he is above all law, and vices are virtues in him.* Every bishop and priest partakes of the pope's prerogatives, and claims supreme and exclusive authority in faith and practice. Thus their people are taught—"Q. Is any great honour due to priests and ghostly fathers? A. Yes: for they are God's anointed, represent the person of Christ, and are the fathers and feeders of our souls. Q. In what are we bound to believe and obey them? A. In all things belonging to faith and the government of our souls."†

"Reverence and honour priests! What can be said but that all power of heavenly things in general is granted to them by God, for he says, Whose sins we retain, they are retained. What power can be greater than this? The Father gave all power to the Son, and I see this power given to the priests by God the Son." "They administer the most holy body and blood of Christ, which they alone consecrate, receive, and give to others."‡

"Whence," asks the judicious and excellent Thomas Scott, "did the almost universally prevalent opinion originate, that the administration of sacraments is the peculiar and highest office of the Christian ministry, above even that of preaching the gospel? I have no hesitation in answering—From Popery, in its incipient or more matured state: to change by the *opus operatum*, which the

* See Cardinal Bellarmine, quoted by Jewel.

† Douay Catechism.

‡ Chrysostom, Bernard, Francis, and others quoted. Protest. vol. ii. p. 122.

priest alone can perform aright, 'a child of the devil' into 'a child of God,' which must be the case if baptism be regeneration, or inseparable from it; and to change, in the same way, a piece of bread into the body, soul, and Divine nature of Christ, and render it an object of adoration, derives a far higher dignity to the priesthood, than even apostolical preaching can do."* But it sets at nought the prophetical, priestly, and kingly offices of Christ, the true and only Mediator, and it carries perishing sinners blindfold and helpless to the pit of destruction.

* Scott, Exposition on 1 Cor. i. 17.

CHAPTER XV.

SUPERSTITION AND FRAUD.

THE superstitions of the church of Rome are endless. Several have been referred to. They are silly in themselves, and degrading to those who observe them. They prostrate the human mind in slavish subjection to a priest, and keep the feelings in continued disquiet and ferment, with imaginary fears, useless observances, and groundless expectations. There is no real peace or satisfaction for the superstitious. They are in continual dread of falling into sin about things that are altogether indifferent. Every thing is regarded as an omen, and the attention and exertions being thus engrossed by trifles, are necessarily taken off from concerns of real importance. The superstitions of Papists are not the mere follies of the vulgar and ignorant, but are carefully instilled by their priests as matters of high concern and strict obligation. The Council of Trent most solemnly requires all pastors to "use all diligence to promote obedience to all their commands, and especially to those which relate to the mortification of the flesh, as the choice of meats and fasts ; as also which tend to the increase of piety, as the devout

and religious celebration of feast days ; admonishing the people to obey those who are set over them ; for they who hear them shall hear God the rewarder, but they who despise them shall feel God is the avenger." " Of faith in Christ, love to God, and holiness of life, according to the Scriptures, little, very little is said ; but abstinence from meat, eggs, butter, and milk during Lent, and hearing mass, and idleness on saints' days, together with implicit subjection to the priest, elevate a man to a high rank among the pious, and are imagined to procure for him the especial favour of Heaven ; while disobedience or neglect of these human inventions is denounced as a mortal sin, which exposes the offender to everlasting damnation."

A papal dispensation or indulgence, however, changes the nature of things. He who has paid the pope for a *flesh bull*, may feast even in Lent ; while another, who did not choose, or could not afford to purchase the privilege, dare not eat an egg or take a spoonful of milk, without committing mortal sin.* What says an inspired apostle on matters such as these ? " Meat commendeth us not to God ;" we are neither the better nor the worse for eating or not eating. " Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day." " Let no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way." " For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God and approved of men."†

* See Text Book, p. 343.

† 1 Cor. viii. 8 ; Col. ii. 16 ; Rom. xiv. 13, 17, 18.

The superstition of *monkery* has been already adverted to.* A life of retreat from the ordinary comforts of civilized society, was first resorted to from necessity, then persevered in from choice ; perhaps with a sincere, though mistaken, view to higher attainments in piety. The course adopted led more or less to self-righteousness and vain-glory ; for such is the natural and unvaried tendency of all self-invented observances, and such was the result in every recorded instance.† As the fashion prevailed, regular societies were instituted for “the religious” of either sex ; monasteries and convents every where multiplied ; all the inmates of which bound themselves by three vows—1. Of poverty, all their worldly property being made over to the institution ; 2. Of perpetual celibacy ; and, 3. Of implicit obedience to the head of their establishment. Most of them were distinguished by some particular austerity, mortification, and self-torture ; and he who could invent or adopt some new mode of cruelty, was deemed a proficient in holiness.

Human merit pervades all these superstitions. Many have resorted to this spurious holiness with a view to work out a righteousness of their own ;

* Chap. vi. p. 73.

† If Ephraim the Syrian be named as an exception, it should be remembered, (1.) That he had the uncommon good sense and charity to quit his beloved solitude, and live in the city of Edessa, for the sake of enjoying Christian communion, and rendering himself useful to others. (2.) That even his talents and virtues were rendered less advantageous to the world than they might have been, and even his own piety less manly and complete, by his mistaken ideas of spending life in cultivating it.

and many more with a view to atone for past irregularities and horrible crimes. Multitudes of young persons, too, have been drawn in by false representations of the holiness and happiness of a secluded life, to take upon themselves vows which they did not understand, and the observance of which consigned their lives to useless wretchedness, whereas they were fitted to be ornaments and blessings in society.

Monasticism has done incalculable mischief to religion. Of its three vows, the first two have in thousands of instances been shamefully broken. "The enormous wealth of the monasteries, often procured by the most nefarious methods, and the scandalous lives of their inmates, both male and female, have been exposed by all writers on ecclesiastical history. If it be said that these are abuses, it may be justly replied that they are inseparable from the system. For it is beyond the power of any institution entirely to extinguish the propensities of our nature, or to preserve purity in a mode of living which is altogether at variance with the principles and precepts of the word of God."*

That the wretchedness and the vice of these unscriptural establishments are not found only in musty chronicles of the dark ages, any reader may satisfy himself by consulting "Forsyth's Travels in Italy," "Rome in the Nineteenth Century," or "Practical and Internal Evidence against Catholicism," by Rev. Joseph Blanco White, formerly a Romish priest.

* Text Book, pp. 318, 319.

But the Bible and *its* lessons! Mark the Saviour's prayer for his disciples, "I pray *not* that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."* Mark his instructions to them. "Ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the lights of the world."† Salt must be sprinkled among the mass, to preserve the whole from corruption. While shut up in a vessel by itself it is not answering its design. The light immured in a cave, or incased under a bushel, guides no traveller on his way, serves no purpose of useful activity; but placed on a candlestick, or exalted in a lamp, it becomes a household comfort or a public benefit. "Let *your* light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

What say the apostles? "Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, *therein* abide with God."‡ "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."§ "But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased."|| Distinguishing holiness consists in the "fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;"¶ "worshipping God in the Spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh."**

An early superstition, coeval indeed with the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Roman empire, was that of *pilgrimages*. Helena, the mother of the emperor Constantine, to evidence

* John xvii. 15.

† Matt. v. 13—16.

‡ 1 Cor. vii. 24.

§ Rom. xii. 11. || Heb. xiii. 16.

¶ Gal. v. 22, 23.

** Phil. iii. 3.

her zeal, erected churches, and travelled about from place to place to search for remains in any way connected with the sacred history. Socrates the historian gives a particular account of her visiting Jerusalem and searching for the sepulchre of Christ, which was with difficulty found, on account of the heaps of stones and rubbish thrown over it; and, indeed, over which the pagans had set up a temple of Venus. At length the devotee was gratified by finding (whether or not her attendants took any indirect means for accomplishing her wishes is not said) three crosses, and a table with Pilate's inscription. By the experiment of Macarius, bishop of Jerusalem, the miraculous power of the "true cross" was proved. Over the sepulchre she builded "a goodly and gorgeous church, calling it New Jerusalem." One half of the cross she locked in a silver chest, and left there to be seen of such as were desirous to behold such monuments; the other half she sent to the emperor, who set it up at Constantinople, over a pillar of red marble. Socrates* candidly owns that he received all these particulars only by hearsay, but that those who told him affirmed them to be true. Certainly "the church of the Holy Sepulchre," and another at Bethlehem, were for many ages the resort of multitudes of pilgrims, some of whom doubtless visited the spot with sincere though mistaken feelings of devotion; and many with a superstitious notion of expiating their sins, or a selfish desire to exalt themselves in the esteem of others, and to secure the many special ecclesiastical

* See Eccles. Hist. Socrates, book i. chap. xiii.

privileges connected with such observance. The pilgrimages of the faithful have been too fruitful a source of gain to ecclesiastics to be suffered to fall into desuetude ; but the place of pilgrimage is now changed to Rome, and some other places in papal states, to which tradition has attached some legendary sanctity or miraculous virtue.

Much might be said of the folly and superstition of these observances, but it is enough that the New Testament tells us nothing of the holiness of places, but encourages us to “ pray every where,” worshipping God in “ spirit and in truth ;” expecting the fulfilment of our Saviour’s promise, “ Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them ;” and remembering the sacred injunction, “ What thing soever I command you, observe to do it : thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.”*

Relics are almost too contemptible for notice, but the Romanist is taught to hold them in superstitious “ veneration, and to believe that by them God bestows many benefits upon men.”† Chrysostom assured the populace of Constantinople that “ an empire or a city well furnished with the bones of martyrs might defy the world in arms. Only trust to your saints, fellow citizens, and you are safe.” “ Well-instructed people, in the seventh and eighth centuries, were taught to defend their cities with images, while those of the fourth were to do so with relics. The fathers of the second Council of Nice put confidence in carved wood and sculptured marble ; their predecessors, in

* 1 Tim. ii. 8 ; John iv. 24 ; Matt. xviii. 20 ; Dent. xii. 32.

† Council of Trent, decree at 25th Session.

crumbling bones, dust, and rags.”* Jerome, deploring the calamities inflicted on his native country by the Goths and their barbarous allies, after enumerating massacres, conflagrations, etc., gives this as the climax, “their contemptuous treatment of the relics of holy martyrs.”

The catacombs,† when Christianity was no longer persecuted, ceased to be the resort or the burial-place of the Christians. They were closed, unused, neglected, and forgotten. It was not until the sixteenth century, that attention was called to their existence and their uses. They then became far more precious to the monks and priests than a mine of silver. Graves were ransacked, bones collected, skeletons divided and hawked from city to city and from country to country, as the relics of some celebrated saint or martyr, to which the credulous multitude were invited to do reverence, and from which they were taught to expect miraculous benefits. Scarcely a convent, a monastery, or a palace, but was enriched with a skull, a rib, an arm, a leg, or a tooth. It could not always be determined with certainty to whom these mouldering relics had originally belonged. The clergy were much less scrupulous of exalting meaner bones than of degrading nobler ones. In the superstition and ignorance of the times, the demand was great, and the merchant monks “not unfrequently sold several different skulls as the only true skull of some particular martyr, and several different arms as the veritable arms of some favourite saint;

* Ancient Christianity, quoted in Conder's Harmony, p. 201.

† Referred to chap. vi. p. 67.

so that even to the present day some saints have several different heads and arms in several places. The traveller in Italy discovers some martyr who has had two or three heads, and some saint who has had four or five arms, or a still greater superfluity of legs. The enormous amount of wealth which this traffic has brought into Rome is incalculable.”*

It is an interesting fact connected with the catacombs, that nearly all the ancient inscriptions on the tombs of Christians begin or end with the words “in peace,” or “in Christ,” thus forming a testimony against the corruptions of a later day. They neither apprehended the torments of *purgatory*, nor did they emulate the honour of *saint-worship*. It was enough for them that they lived in the peace of God, died in the faith of Christ, and rested in hope of a glorious resurrection.

It would be easy, but unprofitable, to fill many pages with lists of the despicable and disgusting objects of idolatrous worship as relics. One example may suffice. At the time of the Reformation in England, and the dissolution of monasteries, there were found in the different monasteries and other places of Romish devotion an immense number of teeth, enough to have filled a large cask, and all affirmed to be the genuine relics of St. Apollonia. This martyr having had her teeth dashed out by the executioner, was regarded by the Romanists as having especial power to cure the tooth-ach; and prayers were accordingly offered to her by the ignorant, while

* Mornings with Jesuits, p. 330.

suffering. Doubtless a fee was given for liberty to approach the relics, and tooth-ach being a common complaint, it was deemed requisite to multiply the means of cure in proportion to the number of applicants.

Those who wish for more information about relics may find it in Middleton's Letters from Rome.

The following judicious and candid remarks deserve consideration: "There were no relics in the Old Testament church, except the pot of manna, Aaron's rod, and the brazen serpent. The two former were preserved by God's own appointment, but they were carefully concealed in the holy of holies from popular inspection; the other was preserved by human contrivance and became an occasion of idolatry; until a pious king, who doubtless recollected with reverence and gratitude the event commemorated by it, destroyed it with decided abhorrence."

"The superstitious veneration paid to sacred relics in the (Romish) church, and especially the adoration paid to the form of the cross, and even in express words to the wood and nails of it, with all the impostures which have arisen from that absurd idolatry, have been exactly parallel to the worship of the brazen serpent, and Hezekiah's example fully authorizes the total abolition or disuse of every thing of that kind in religious worship."

"There never were any relics preserved in the Christian church, however good the intention of the preserver might be, which have not issued in such abuses, superstitions, and impositions, as must cause all *judicious* friends to the gospel to unite in earnestly praying for their extirpation. Yet

true piety and fervent affection for holy things and holy men naturally lead that way ; unless sound judgment, and considerable acquaintance with human nature and with the history of superstition, counteract their efficacy.”*

The use of *holy water*, with which not only human worshippers are continually sprinkled, but also, on particular days and at particular places, horses, asses, and other cattle, is a superstition borrowed from heathenism ; as is also that of honouring saints, or the virgin Mary, by burning a number of lamps or *wax candles* before their shrines, images, or altars. The primitive writers frequently expose the folly and absurdity of this heathenish custom. “They light up candles to God,” says Lactantius, “as if he lived in the dark ; and do not they deserve to pass for madmen who offer lamps to the Author and Giver of light?”†

The frauds of the Romish church have incidentally been glanced at on several occasions. It is only necessary to enumerate a few of the most flagrant.

Many doctrines and practices of Popery have been established by forged writings, purporting to be those of an early period. The celebrated *Decretals*, first published in the 9th century, consist of letters, decrees, and canons, or ecclesiastical rules, ascribed to the bishops of Rome from the earliest period, in which they were made to give such directions and issue such commands, as they would have done had the abominations of Popery then existed. Men were thereby led to believe,

* Scott, Exposition on 2 Kings xviii. 4.

† See Protestant, vol. ii. pp. 142, 143.

that the ceremonies, orders, and forms of government thus established, were ancient and even apostolic, and not, as they were in reality, inventions of later date. For a long time the book passed current in the world, and the canon law was founded upon it. But the author had performed his work in so blundering and bungling a manner, that when learning revived, the imposture was quickly detected, and it was seen that the production was an infamous collection of frauds and forgeries, put together by an obscure writer for the purpose of exalting the pretensions of the Roman see. Letters are attributed to men who died long before the time in which they were said to be written; documents are dated, in the years of magistrates who were not in office at the time; and fragments of later authors, of different periods, are joined together, and the name of some ancient father prefixed. The learned even among Roman Catholics have now, with one consent, rejected these things as spurious; but the absurdities they originated or legalized are still cherished, and notwithstanding the admitted fraud, the champions of Popery have not refrained from adducing them as authorities in their standard works of controversy. Is not this the "deceivableness of unrighteousness?" 2 Thess. ii. 10.

The history of saints and relics is such a tissue of "lying wonders," as one possessed of common sense has hardly patience to read; such as that St. Dionysius, having been beheaded, took up his head in his hand and walked away with it; that St. Winifred, a favourite saint in Wales, having been beheaded, her head was miraculously joined on

again, showing only a small red mark, after which she was abbess of the nunnery, and patroness of a well to which people even in the present day resort, expecting miraculous cures. Then there are miraculous pictures of the virgin, which it is affirmed open the eyes ; one, which, on occasion of a stone being thrown by an infidel, is said to have turned the infant Jesus to the other arm, received the blow, and gushed out bleeding. Multitudes of these absurdities are firmly believed even by educated people.* Credulity is a cardinal virtue in the church of Rome.

Then we have tales without end of visions and apparitions, seasonably manifested when some such aid was required to establish a doctrine, or enforce a creed, or found a monastery. It is quite possible that some of these tales may have originated in mere enthusiasm and superstition, but if not invented, they have been preserved and propagated to serve corrupt purposes. The warrantable and only safe course in regard to both traditions and supposed visions or revelations is, to judge of them by their own merits. They are not found in Scripture, therefore they have no authority. "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream ; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat ? saith the Lord ?"†

Duplicity is often practised, and justified, and approved, when it is thought that it will promote the cause of the Romish church. Such for instance as representing a doctrine in the most

* See Mornings with Jesuits, pp. 6, 89, 272.

† Jer. xxiii. 28.

palatable light when dealing with Protestants,* denying or professing just as may best suit the purpose; denying well-known historical facts, or principles which are maintained in all their authorized formularies, and which, seeing the church is infallible and cannot change, must be only held in abeyance till circumstances warrant their being brought forth and acted upon.

It is a principle of the Romish church, that faith is not to be kept with heretics. This principle is generally disavowed by the Romanists in the present day, because it will not bear the light. Mention it to a Romanist in England, and he will maintain that it is not, and never was, held; and will appeal to his own solemn oath against it. The universities of Louvain, Douay, Alcala, Valladolid, Salamanca, and Paris, when appealed to on the subject by William Pitt, prime minister to George III., with one voice denied the fact, some of them professing perfect astonishment and horror that such a question should be proposed to them. But though we are far from charging individual Romanists with perjury, it is an incontrovertible fact that the pope claims and exercises the power of dispensing with the obligation of an oath. There are documents on record well nigh innumerable, of one pope after another dispensing with oaths that could not profitably be kept; (How does the Roman Catholic Bible read that verse in the fifteenth Psalm, that a good man "swears to his own hurt and changes not?") decreeing that "faith is not to be kept with excommunicated persons;" and intimating that

* See Donovan's Translation of Pope Pius's Catechism for the use of Maynooth College.

“it is a mortal sin to keep faith with heretics ;” that “contracts made against the canon law are invalid though confirmed by an oath,” etc. Accordingly the Council of Constance violated the safe-conduct given by the emperor Sigismund to John Huss, who on the faith of it came to the place of judgment and was burned to death.

Pope Pius v. strove hard to induce the emperor Charles v. in like manner to violate the safe-conduct given to Luther, on the ground that “he was a man of that character with whom he was not obliged to keep his word.” The emperor replied, “When good faith may be banished from all the world, it ought to be found with an emperor.” In that particular the emperor was a dissenter from the church of Rome ; and so are all they who feel themselves bound by the word of a man of honour and a Christian.

A few words about the *Jesuits* will close this topic.

This order of men in the Romish church originated with Ignatius Loyola in the 16th century. The defence and advancement of the Romish faith are the ostensible objects at which they aim. It is their governing principle, that the end sanctifies the means, and there is no species of artifice or intrigue to which they will not resort. They vow implicit obedience to their principal, and the whole of their training goes to form the habit. They are men of polished education, refined and fascinating manners. The general is intimately acquainted with the character of each, and employs him accordingly. Each is the unshrinking and unhesitating slave of those who rule the order.

They are taught to repel, as the suggestions of pride and rebellion, any tendency to question the moral rectitude of the part they are ordered to perform. The general of the order with his council resolves on some purpose. The members of the order are the instruments to be employed. The commands are given, the obedience rendered, and the whole purpose accomplished, without any one of the instruments knowing or even inquiring any thing about it. When a member is sent for to his general, it may be to bid him undertake the conduct of a university; it may be to call him from that, and bid him become porter or messenger of some family or establishment in any land. The matter is carried so far, that not unfrequently a member may be one day the porter of a convent in France, and the next day the private secretary or minister of a prince in Germany; on one day he may be the confessor of a monarch, and the next day master of a village school.*

“The history of the Jesuits reveals scenes of knavery, vice, and treason, unparalleled in the annals of any country under heaven.” “All their efforts have been employed in upholding the grossest errors and superstitions of Romanism, and have been unscrupulously characterized by craft, treachery, or violence, separately or conjointly, as circumstances might seem to dictate.” Their system “authorizes all kinds of crime whenever it is pleaded that some good will probably result therefrom; enjoins the temporary concealment of principles and character in order to

* Mornings with Jesuits, p. 14—38.

accomplish its nefarious designs ; declares assassination or murder to be venial and even meritorious, and acts upon its principles—(witness the death of Henry iv. of France)—It pursues heretics to the death.” The governments of Europe were successively compelled to rid themselves of these mischievous intruders, whose intrigues (often carried on under the veil of sacramental confession) were found to compromise the safety of kingdoms. At length even the pope (Clement xiv.) abolished the order. But it was re-established in 1814 by Pope Pius v. Since that time their secret influence has been traced in the convulsions of nations and states,* and they are even now labouring indefatigably, in many instances unsuspectedly, in the British dominions.

The late Dr. Milner, vicar apostolic of the midland district, and one of the most subtle and dangerous controversialists, was a Jesuit. May evangelical Protestants of all denominations be wise as serpents and harmless as doves,† and surrounded as they are with such insidious foes, equip themselves in armour of proof!‡

* See Conder's Harmony, pp. 428, 444.

† Matt. x. 16.

‡ Eph. vi. 10—18.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CHURCH OF ROME—BIGOTRY AND PERSECUTION.

“MASTER, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.” Such was the statement of the apostle John, which he was led to make in consequence of a reproof of the Master to the disciples generally, for disputing who should be greatest. The reproof, and the example by which it was illustrated, perhaps led the beloved apostle to suspect that their zeal had been blamable. “Forbid him not,” replied the Saviour; “there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.”*

On another occasion, James and John, actuated as they thought by affectionate zeal for their Lord, asked permission to resent an affront put upon him, by “calling down fire from heaven to consume” those whom they deemed his enemies. “But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: for the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s

* Mark ix. 38—40.

lives, but to save them.”* These are the “laws of the house ;”† standing testimonies against persecution of every form and degree. He who would not warrant an appeal to Heaven for fire to descend on the offenders, can never approve of his servants taking the matter in their own hands, and kindling fire on earth ; and those must be sadly ignorant of their Lord’s will, or destitute of his spirit, who would attempt it. Yet this mistake has been common among Christians of almost all denominations—perhaps *all* who have been tried by having power in their hands. We cannot deny that Protestants have been persecutors—we own it with grief and shame—but at the same time we know that they acted contrary to their principles. But the church of Rome has *unquestionably* been of all churches the most persecuting, and persecution is in the very essence of her system. Yes, unquestionably ; for though within a few months some have even publicly denied, and many are trying to explain away, the charge, the testimony of history is too unequivocal on that point ; and there are too many existing documents and monuments, not merely in the libraries and museums of the learned and the curious, but scattered among the people in all nations of the civilized world, for the most positive denial or contradiction to deserve a moment’s credit. The sin of the Romish church, in this respect, “is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond ; it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of their altars.”‡

* Luke ix. 54—56.

† Ezek. xliii. 12.

‡ Jer. xvii. 1.

As soon as the church of Rome became possessed of temporal power, that power was employed in the work of persecution. There had been some angry strife and hard words before about differences of opinion and practice, but at the first council convened by the emperor, heretics were anathematized and outlawed; and indeed the chief business of councils, first and last, has been that of enforcing uniformity and punishing heresy.

“ Out of the Roman Catholic church there is no salvation :” this is most positively asserted, and runs through all the formularies and all the instructions of the Romanist. Children are taught to lisp it in their catechism, that all who disobey “ *the church*,” “ *go to hell for all eternity* ;” the conclusions of the learned, the declarations of the noble, the priests’ instructions, the pontiff’s decrees, re-echo the sound—“ Out of the Roman Catholic church there is no salvation.”

Protestants of every class and denomination—Leighton, Heber, Martyn, Newton, Cecil, and Scott—Owen, Baxter, and Howe—Milton and Locke—Henry and Doddridge—Whitfield and Wesley—Bunyan and Howard—*all* are included in the same condemning sentence. No matter what were their excellences : their piety might be seraphic, their benevolence God-like, their path “ *like the shining light*” that illuminates and gladdens all nature ; they committed the unpardonable sin of refusing to pay homage to the man of the triple crown, and therefore the Roman Catholic is bound to believe that they are lost for ever.

And the intolerance exists in practice as well as in theory. The fourth council of Lateran, held

under Pope Innocent III. in the year 1215, in its third canon,* not only anathematized and excommunicated heretics, but ordered them to be delivered over to the secular power; directed all sovereigns and states to exterminate them, and threatened excommunication if they refused to do so. It granted also the same indulgence to those who should extirpate heretics by force of arms, as to those who joined the crusades to the Holy Land.

The decree was practically carried out in the crusades against the Albigenses in the middle ages, and the horrible persecutions endured by the Reformers in the sixteenth century.

Let it be remembered, that the horrible decree of the Lateran *has never been repealed*. It is *still the law of the church of Rome*. It was confirmed by the Council of Trent; it is embodied in the creed of Pope Pius; its principles are pressed as bounden matter of faith and duty on every Romanist, and it is embraced with a solemn oath by every proselyte to that communion.

The punishment of heretics "by the secular power" has given to the advocates of Popery the flimsy pretence, that the church does not persecute—never has persecuted. Dr. Milner made much of this in his most jesuitical work; so as to lead many simple-hearted Protestants to think that what he said must be true.† It is easy in a literal truth to embody a moral falsehood; and the advocates of the papal system are adepts in the practice. The church of Rome itself is not her own execu-

* Dupin, vol. xi. pp. 96, 97. Also Text Book, pp. 395, 413.

† End of Religious Controversy, p. 353.

tioner. The process is this. First, the church requires all kings, magistrates, and estates to deal with heretics in a certain way, and threatens excommunication if they do not obey. Secondly, the church pronounces this or that person or people to have incurred the sentence of heresy, and delivers them over to the secular arm. Thirdly, the secular power carries the sentence into execution. Thus, according to the mystic vision of the Apocalypse, the persecuting church in some respects wears the aspect of a lamb, but has the voice of a dragon, and revives the power of the former beast,* the persecuting secular power.

The following remarkable application of prophecy was by the Abbot Joachim, towards the close of the twelfth century. (Joachim himself, it may be observed, was censured by the Council of Lateran, and his followers pronounced heretics, 1215; his monastery, however, was spared, "because they lived regularly and observed very good discipline.")†

"But why two beasts? Because as Christ is both King and Priest, so Satan may put forth the first beast to usurp his kingship, the second his priestly dignity; the latter having some mighty prelate, some universal pontiff, as it were, over the whole world, who may be the very antichrist of whom St. Paul speaks, as being extolled above all that is called God, and worshipped, sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself as God. This may be while making use of the strength of the first beast for his purpose."‡

* See Rev. xiii.

† Dupin, vol. xi. chap. vi. p. 96.

‡ See Conder's Harmony, p. 321.

The horrors of the inquisition—the holy inquisition—established by the church of Rome for the express purpose of hunting out and punishing heretics, might occupy many pages, or rather furnish materials for many volumes. The following is a condensed but faithful view from the pen of a modern writer. “It is a tribunal over which three ecclesiastics preside, having the cognizance of heresy, infidelity, blasphemy, perjury, sorcery, poisoning, bigamy, and every other species of offence which can be construed into a crime against religion ; a tribunal which immures in a secret dungeon its wretched victim, not allowing him the slightest communication with relative or friend, medical attendant, or legal adviser ; a tribunal which employs hundreds of spies to search for culprits, and receives accusations against any man from a voluntary informer, however interested, or however base ; a tribunal which gives the astonished prisoner no intimation of the crime with which he is charged, or the person through whose testimony he is arrested, but requires him, guilty or innocent, to guess the sin and indict himself ; a tribunal into the cheerless caverns of which many enter, but few return.

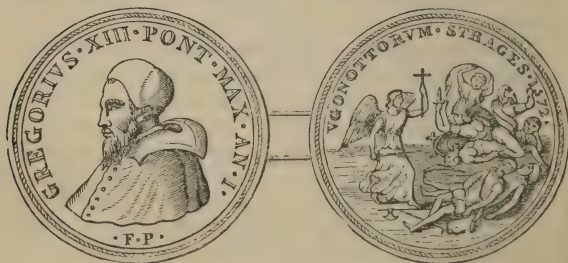
“ In the stillness of midnight, when the family is tranquilly reposing, a loud knocking is heard at the door. ‘ Who is there ? ’ ‘ The holy inquisition ! ’ A carriage is perceived, in which some of the familiars of the court are seated. The tremulous voice within now asks, ‘ Who is wanted ? ’ The individual is named. It may be the father or the son ; it may be the wife or the daughter ; but expostulation or delay would be both

unavailing and dangerous. The master of the house may be wanted for his riches ; the object of his tenderest affections may be wanted for her beauty ; but not a word must be spoken, not a minute must be wasted : an immediate surrender takes place. The carriage drives away with its helpless captive, and the bereaved family dare not follow or even lament aloud, but mourn in silence and despair ; and when an acquaintance, missing the individual from his accustomed seat at table, asks what has become of him, a significant shake of the head is the only answer. Years roll away, but no inquiry must be made ; and if after the lapse of time, and the endurance of suffering, the victim is permitted to return, his lips are sealed, he or she is sworn to secrecy ; all is mystery and horror.

“ But there is One to whom the darkness and the light are both alike. His eye traces the course, penetrates the thick stone wall, and surveys the gloomy cell. Every sigh enters his ear, and is recorded in his journal. And there is nothing secret that shall not be revealed. Many a tragedy is preserved in the book of Divine remembrance, which shall be rehearsed before assembled worlds. The oppressed shall have liberty to speak as audibly as the oppressor. The veil of hypocrisy shall be torn aside. Persons and events shall appear in their own true colours. Then will the history of the inquisition afford to the whole intelligent creation, the most complete display of the amazing wickedness of man, and the yet more amazing long-suffering of his Creator.”*

* According to the estimate of Llorente, the number of

The French massacre of Bartholomew's day, 1572, must not be quite overlooked. The details of horror may be read in ecclesiastical histories generally. The number of its victims was frightful ; the whole affair was characterized by treachery and cruelty, beyond the power of language to describe. It would not, however, have been particularly mentioned here, as it is but one fact among many, but that the head of the papacy identified himself with this execrable act of royal perfidy and enormous wickedness, by offering public thanksgivings, by countenancing every demonstration of savage joy, and by ordering a commemorative medal to be struck, which is still extant, and which, both by graphic representation and by



victims of the Spanish inquisition, from 1481 to 1808, amounted to 341,021, of whom above thirty thousand were burned alive. During the French rule in Spain the inquisition was abolished. Ferdinand VII. restored it in 1814, but in 1820 it was again abolished by the Cortes, and it has not yet been re-established. Its operations have also been suspended in Portugal, and very much restricted in Rome itself." Lectures on Popery, pp. 144—146.

its inscription, celebrates "The slaughter of the Hugonots."

Let it not be said that the church of Rome is not a bigoted and a persecuting church.

But the weapons of the Christian warfare are *not carnal*, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds.* Truth, holiness, and love are the best arguments against error and heresy, wherever they may exist; and these are the only weapons the Christian is warranted to employ, and on which he may expect the Divine blessing. "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."†

* 2 Cor. x. 4.

† 2 Tim. ii. 25.

CHAPTER XVII.

TENDENCIES OF POPERY.

WHEN we speak of the tendencies of a system, we mean the way in which it generally and naturally leads. It may not in every instance produce all the effects to which it naturally tends, because some particular circumstance may counteract that tendency. There are exceptions to the general rule. When we speak of the tendencies of Popery as generally evil, we feel glad to make every exception that truth and candour will allow. Amidst all the errors of the church, a valuable portion of truth has been maintained. The doctrine of the Trinity has always been defended. Many truly scriptural and evangelical truths have been taught as to the person and work of the Redeemer and the operation of the Holy Spirit, though obscured by the mass of rubbish and superstition with which they were intermingled and overlaid.

There have also been in all ages true and eminent servants of Jesus Christ in its communion. "True Protestants as regards the essential doctrines of Christianity, diffused a cheering light during the dark ages, and in the humblest convent, in the remotest parish, might be found poor pious monks and priests to alleviate great

sufferings. The Catholic church was not the papacy." "The church of Christ was a dilapidated building; but in digging round it, a portion of the living rock on which it had been originally built, was discovered among its foundations. Numerous institutions dating from the pure ages of the church still existed, and could not fail to awaken in many souls evangelical sentiments opposed to the prevailing superstition. Inspired men, the old doctors of the church, whose writings were deposited in various libraries, raised here and there a solitary voice. We may hope that it was listened to in silence by many an attentive ear. Let us not doubt that the Christians—and how pleasing is the thought!—had many brethren and sisters in those monasteries, where we too easily discover little else than hypocrisy and licentiousness."*

We will further admit with pleasure, that in the present day there are many individuals in communion with the church of Rome, whose character and conduct are by no means such as the principles of Romanism tend to produce. This is especially the case when Romanists live in a land of freedom and mingle with enlightened society generally. They see and are convinced that there may be good in persons of other religious denominations. Their prejudices relax, their feelings, if not their views, become more liberal, and instead of bitterly anathematizing those who differ, they almost, despite of their Romanism, venture to indulge a charitable hope that they may be partakers of the common salvation.

* D'Aubigne, vol. i. pp. 58, 90.

Popery has a natural tendency to ignorance, both because it represents knowledge as unnecessary and dangerous, and because it actually opposes the direct means of knowledge. The Roman Catholic is not required to understand or reason upon what he is told, he is not allowed to exercise his own judgment. It is quite enough for him if he assents to what the church affirms, attends mass with tolerable frequency, does as he is bid about fasting, and keeps away from all meetings of heretics. Let him do all this, and he is accounted a good Catholic, entitled to all the rites of his church, and safe for another world. What incitement then is there to a thirst for knowledge and improvement? Is it not to be expected that such training will lead people to be content with ignorance, and that, however shrewd they may be in common things, they will not know the principles of any thing, least of all any thing connected with religion?

We have seen that Popery opposes the use of the Scriptures; and any attempt to give instruction to the poor, however carefully guarded from any thing like sectarian bias, is uniformly and bitterly opposed by the Romish clergy. One instance may suffice, though many might be given. A benevolent gentleman in Ireland provided a house and opened a Sunday school, in one room for boys, in another for girls. Lest offence should be taken, even the Bible was not used. Having made his arrangements, the gentleman invited his tenants to send their children for two hours on Sunday morning and the same in the evening. On Sunday morning, accordingly, the school was opened with sixty children, eager to learn to read.

Information of this soon reached the priest, who immediately cursed from the altar every parent who should presume to send a child to be taught by a heretic, and declared he would not give *the rites of the church* to any person when dying, who had done so. In vain did the gentleman assure the priest that there was not the least wish to proselyte a single child; in vain was he invited personally to visit the school, and employ the co-operation of any of his own flock who would attend; the priest was inexorable, and the design of imparting the rudiments of merely moral instruction was defeated.*

Many instances might be adduced of the uncongenial nature of Popery to every thing connected with the improvement of the human mind and the diffusion of useful knowledge. Indeed it is a well-known adage of the Romish church, not exploded even in the present day, that "Ignorance is the mother of devotion:" the less people know the more likely they are to be blindly obedient, which Popery esteems the safest and best course for them.

The art of printing has put a great drawback on Popery. "Hereby," says Foxe the martyr-logist, "tongues (languages) are known, knowledge groweth, judgment increaseth, books are dispersed, the Scripture is seen, the doctors be read, stories be opened, times compared, truth discerned, falsehood detected, and with finger pointed; and all through the benefit of printing. Wherefore, I suppose that either the pope must abolish printing, or he must seek a new world to reign

* Protest. vol. iii. p. 245.

over ; for else, as this world standeth, printing doubtless will abolish him."

It is natural that those from whom knowledge is withheld should sink rather than rise in the scale of freedom, intellect, and social improvement. This is verified by facts. "The traveller in Switzerland, as he passes from a Protestant to a Romanist canton, or crosses from one of the former into Italy, is made aware of the fact by the increased filth, degradation, and wretchedness which abound on every side." Every person who has travelled in Ireland, knows that all the decencies of life are to be found among the Protestant population in a tenfold degree more than among the Romanists. At a public meeting, a clergyman, a native of Ireland, drew a frightful picture of the state of religion and morals in that country, from which he had just come. Another gentleman rose to vindicate his country (he too was an Irishman) from what he considered an unjust representation. He said he could declare from his own knowledge that the Irish were as religious, moral, and loyal a people as any on the face of the earth. A somewhat unpleasant feeling arose in the meeting, from two gentlemen so flatly contradicting one another ; but a moment's explanation set all to rights. It turned out that the first speaker referred to the south and west of Ireland,—that is, the popish part of it, where he had recently been ; the second spoke of the north, or Protestant part, to which he belonged ; and the witnesses of these two, who were unknown to each other, confirmed the fact of the vastly superior state of morals (and comfort, it might have been added) among the Protestants.

Popery tends to immorality—as it puts an easier price upon pardon, (and yet it is a price, which corrupt man likes better than a free gift,) and directs how to avoid the consequences of sin without heartily forsaking it, without denying self, taking up the cross daily, and following Christ.*

Popery tends to irreligion.—The more religion consists in outward form, the greater danger there is of the heart being wholly indifferent to it; and the more it is regarded as something to be performed by the priest at last, the more will men be encouraged to put off attention to it till that last necessity evidently approaches.

Popery tends to infidelity.—Thinking and educated men are disgusted with the mummeries of Popery; they identify it with Christianity, and declare themselves infidels; and wherever people have only Popery by which to form their judgment of religion, there, invariably, infidelity fearfully prevails, as in France, Italy, and Spain, at the present day. Several, it might be said many, interesting cases have occurred within the last few years of conversion from nominal Romanism and real infidelity.

Popery tends to foster an uncharitable spirit.—Human nature is proud, and values itself on any distinction. “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men,” is the genuine feeling of human pride, whether the distinction be of rank, birth, wealth, learning, or morality; but never is it so arrogant or so envenomed as when it is made the expression of religious bigotry and scorn. A

* Luke ix. 23.

Romanist is expressly taught to “trust in himself that he is righteous, and to despise others.”* Those who think differently from his church, (for he is not required to think himself,) he is told, are heretics—heirs of perdition—whom the church curses, and with whom he must have no intercourse. This sad lesson needs not much teaching; it too readily takes root in the corrupt heart, and produces exclusive, stern, malignant feelings, ready to break out in acts of spite or violence. Men do not love each other as men, when they are taught to hate each other as heretics. Oh how many bitter feuds, how much bloodshed and misery, may be traced to bigotry! and bigotry is most distinctly inculcated and exemplified by Popery. Persons of a naturally kind and friendly disposition are accustomed to restrain it in this one particular; or if the better feeling will prevail, they feel almost conscious of sin in indulging it. How different from, how opposite to, the spirit of love which the gospel inculcates, is the narrow sectarian spirit of popish bigotry! “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” And who is my neighbour? Every one, be he Jew or Samaritan, orthodox or heretic, who comes within the reach of thy succour, assistance, and goodwill.†

Popery is in the way of every thing truly spiritual.—To be a Christian is to depend on Christ alone for salvation, to be born again by the influence of the Holy Spirit, to become a new creature, and live a new life, a life of faith, devotion, and obedience to the will of God. But the teach-

* Luke xviii. 1, 11.

† See Luke x. 27—37.

ings of the Romish church strike at the root of true faith, pure and simple worship, and holy practice; a man cannot become really spiritual without incurring the charge of heresy. He is either rendered wretched by the priestly intervention, the distracting superstitions that come between him and his God, and at length breaks the yoke of bondage, and seeks another communion; or he is driven forth and disavowed by friends and kindred, who will not, or dare not, longer associate with him; or fear, custom, and interest prevail against conviction and conscience; he returns to "the beggarly elements,"* and gradually relapses into his former apathy. The religion of Popery is opposed to the religion of Jesus Christ.

"There are two things almost equally strange to me: that the Jews should own the verity of the Old Testament, and particularly of Daniel's prophecy, and not see that the Messiah is come: and that the Papists should believe the Divinity of the New Testament, and particularly of the Revelation, and not see that their church is antichristian. But while I admire [wonder at] the wilful stupidity of both these parties, I cannot but admire also the wisdom of God, in making use of both these in his providence, to confirm to us the verity of Christianity; in prophesying both of the one and the other so long before, and in continuing them to this day, as standing monuments of the Divinity both of the Old and New Testaments."†

* Gal. iv. 9.

† Rev. Rob. Fleming, Discourse on the Rise and Fall of the Papacy, p. 62.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WITNESSES AGAINST POPERY.

It is very common for Romanists to boast of the antiquity of their religion, and of its having held uninterrupted sway from the time of the apostles to the rise of the (as they say, pretended) reformation in the fifteenth century ; and the great bulk of uneducated people, together with not a few who ought to be better informed, believe this to be true. But the fact is, that no period in the history of the church since the time of the apostles has been without some who testified against its corruptions, either generally or particularly. For so doing, many, perhaps most, of them have been branded as heretics ; but a candid examination of the circumstances of the times, the characters, and writings of the men, as far as they have reached us, with even the testimony of their enemies, will generally lead us to question whether the title of witnesses for truth did not belong to them rather than that of heretics.

“ Lamentations were uttered by the more spiritual over the prevailing degeneracy, and remonstrances sometimes issued from their lips ; their voices, however, were but little heeded, being drowned in the tumultuous clamour of violent and

ambitious men. In the third century the Novatians arose, who continued throughout the fourth in separation from the imperial church, though they received its leading doctrines, which were not yet materially corrupted. They maintained a much stricter discipline than the dominant sect, by whom they were reviled as Cathari or Puritans. Soon after, the Donatists sprang up in Africa, who, according to the accusation of their revilers, adhered to the Novatian severity of discipline. In the fourth century, Ærius formed many distinct societies of Christians in Armenia, Pontus, and Cappadocia, who condemned prayers for the dead, stated fasts, and the keeping of Easter; who denied that bishops were distinguished from presbyters by any Divine right, and who wished to restore Christianity to its primitive simplicity. In the seventh century, the Paulicians arose in Asia Minor, whose distinctive name was derived from their attachment to the writings of Paul, and who professed to draw their tenets exclusively from the New Testament. In Italy itself, during these successive periods, there were many who refused to submit to the domination of the Romish bishops, and who protested perseveringly against the prevailing corruption. The history of the Albigenses and Waldenses in the south of France, and in the valleys of Piedmont, against whom whole armies were led forth, and who sustained the rage of the apostate church through several centuries, has been traced so far back as to warrant the assertion that they derived their origin from men who refused to submit to the ecclesiastical authority of

Rome, but resisted its usurpations from the beginning.”*

Coeval with the principal corruptions of the church, there were raised up collective bodies of Christians to testify against them ; a succession of these witnessing churches was kept up, though indeed they “prophesied in sackcloth,”† being bitterly persecuted even to the death, and triumphed over as utterly extirpated, but, in the person of their successors, reviving to bear the living testimony. It is deeply interesting to trace the unintentional testimony of an infidel historian to the fulfilment of prophecy in this particular. Early in the seventh century, the Pantheon, or place of the heathen deities at Rome, was consecrated to the virgin Mary and all the saints ; later in the same century the adoration of pictures and images became prevalent. It was for a time resisted, but in 787 finally established (by the second Council of Nice) throughout both the eastern and western empire, not, however, without the protest of three hundred bishops. In the seventh century, the sect of Paulicians sprang up to testify against the growing idolatry. They were persecuted. “From the blood and ashes of the first victims, a succession of teachers and congregations repeatedly arose ; they preached, they disputed, they suffered.”‡

In the 8th century many of the Paulicians dispersed by persecution emigrated, and diffused their doctrines in Europe. When, by the estab-

* Lectures on Popery.

† Rev. xi. 3—11.

‡ Gibbon, ch. liv. vol. x. p. 176.

lishment of idolatry, the temple was profaned, the "true followers of Christ disappear from the so-called visible church, and are known in ecclesiastical history only under the name of heretics."*

"It was in the country of the Albigeois, in the southern provinces of France, that the Paulicians were most deeply implanted." "The visible assemblies of the Paulicians or Albigeois were exterminated by fire and sword, and the bleeding remnant escaped by flight, concealment, or catholic conformity. But the invincible spirit which they had kindled still lived and breathed in the western world. In the state, in the church, and even in the cloister, a latent succession was preserved of the disciples of St. Paul, who protested against the tyranny of Rome, embraced the Bible as their rule of faith, and purified their creed from all the visions of the Gnostic theology. The struggles of Wickliffe in England, of Huss in Bohemia, were premature and ineffectual; but the names of Zuinglius, Luther, and Calvin are pronounced with gratitude as the deliverers of nations."†

Truly has it been observed on this passage, "Had it been the design of the historian to establish the identity of this line of reformed and Protestant Christians with the Apocalyptic witnesses, he could not have employed more fitting terms, and the value of his testimony is enhanced, by its being furnished with no reference to the prediction to which it so precisely corresponds."‡

About 1315 arose the sect of the Lollards in

* Conder, Harmony, 234.

† Gibbon, chap. liv. vol. x. pp. 187, 188.

‡ Conder, Harmony, p. 235, note.

Germany. Their testimony was against many superstitions, and especially against the intercession of saints.* They took their name from Walter Lollard, who was burned at Cologne in 1322.

Wickliffe was born in England in 1324. He is called the morning star of the Reformation, or father of the reformation in the English church, being the first who opposed the authority of the pope, the jurisdiction of the bishops, and the temporalities of the church, together with the doctrine of transubstantiation. His followers were called Lollards.

The days of Wickliffe were passed in incessant warfare against "the master of the emperor, this fellow of God, this deity on earth," whom he terms "the veriest antichrist." The testimony of Walter Brute, in 1391, is yet more remarkable. He was called upon to answer at the bishop's court at Hereford, for affirming that the pope is antichrist. He defended and proved his assertions from Scripture.

A greater work than any human opposition of errors and abuses, was that of translating the Holy Scriptures. This Wickliffe accomplished. Several copies of his work are yet extant, but the New Testament only has been printed. "The divine and miraculous invention of printing" (as it is called by John Foxe) was unknown in Wickliffe's time.

The Scriptures were easily kept back from the laity so long as they were written only in languages unknown to the multitude, and multiplied only by

* Dupin, vol. xii. p. 113.

the slow and costly process of transcription. "The Scriptures had hitherto been 'as a light shining in a dark place,' as a lamp in a sepulchre or a secret cell." But translated into common languages, and multiplied by the art of printing, (which was somewhat before the middle of the 15th century,) they became as the day-star arising on the world. It defied the authority and baffled all the efforts of Rome. Tyndale, from whom England first received the New Testament in a printed volume, fell a victim to the rage of his royal persecutor. But the lamp he kindled was never to be put out." Tyndale's translation was first published in 1526. This edition was bought up by Tonsal, then bishop of London, and burned, but a new and improved edition was brought out in 1534. Tyndale was strangled and burned at Antwerp in 1536, in consequence of the interference of the English government.

The use of metrical psalmody may be traced in connexion with the witnesses of every name. "It was not only a marked feature, but exerted an important influence in promoting the spread of the Reformation, and in strengthening its hold on the public mind." The Albigeois, in their hottest persecution, cheered themselves even in the prospect of death with the psalms and hymns of their church. The Hussites in Bohemia, and in England the followers of Wickliffe, cherished the practice. In Henry the Eighth's time the Psalms of David were versified, and sung by all who were well affected to the Reformation. Bishop Jewel speaks of the visible change among the people, and of its being greatly promoted by inviting them to sing psalms. "Sometimes at Paul's cross there

will be six thousand people singing together." Somewhat later, the psalms of Clement Marot in France were equally attractive and widely adopted ; and the hymns of Luther in Germany. Psalm-singing on the continent was considered an open declaration of Lutheranism, and when Popery revived in England, was abandoned to the Puritans. "It has certainly, from the time of the Reformation, been a characteristic feature of evangelical worship ; and nothing has more powerfully contributed to the preservation of a scriptural standard of doctrine and a high tone of devotional sentiment."*

Thousands of Christ's witnesses, variously enumerated by historians, but not one of them forgotten before God, had been put to death for their testimony. Country after country was cleared of them, and Rome flattered herself that all opposition was at an end. At the 5th Lateran Council, the orator of the session proclaimed, "There is an end of resistance to the papal rule and religion : opposers there exist no more." The conclave assembled in Rome looked upon Christ's witnesses as thenceforth not excommunicated and accursed only, but dead. How mistaken an assumption ! Three years and a half afterwards Martin Luther struck the first open blow of the Saxon Reformation.

Pope Adrian, a few years subsequently, addressing the diet at Nuremburg, wrote, "The heretics, Huss and Jerome, are now alive again in the person of Martin Luther." In the very phraseology of the Apocalyptic prediction,† the Romish writers speak of the sudden resurrection of the Albigen-
sic

* Conder's Harmony, 350.

† Rev. xi. 11.

witnesses in the Lutheran and Calvinistic heresies."*

Thus the train of witnesses and remonstrants is traced from the earliest corruptions of the church, to the period of what is called by distinction, The Reformation. It is not necessary to pursue it further. But it may be interesting just to observe,

(1.) That reform was loudly called for *in* the church of Rome long before *the* Reformation, and by those who never thought of leaving her communion; and that councils were convened with the professed design of promoting reformation, but that the matter was always shuffled aside and evaded, and things left to go on as they were.

(2.) That Romanists often condemn British Protestants as ungrateful in forsaking the church from which they originally received the gospel; but the charge is unfounded. Christianity was planted in Britain long before Popery, and Britain and Ireland long maintained their independence of Rome. England stoutly resisted the interference when Augustine, the proud monk, was sent over by Pope Gregory in 597. Ireland was firm, resolute, and independent later still, as appears from a letter of Columbanus, the famous monk and saint, to Pope Boniface iv. in 614. He closes his letter with these just and striking sentiments: "If it be correct that you have swerved from the true faith, you complain without reason of your children who oppose you, and even exclude you from their communion. In that case they have a right to do so; though they become thereby the head, and you are turned into the tail."

* See Conder, pp. 246—249.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION.

IN the foregoing sketches the writer has been anxiously careful, that every fact advanced should be well authenticated, that every sentiment and principle ascribed to Romanists should be drawn from their own acknowledged writings or established formularies, and that all should be brought to the test of Scripture. The reader who has really desired to gain instruction, can scarcely have failed to come to the conclusion, that the system of Popery is unscriptural and dangerous ; that it fails to answer the end of religion in binding the soul to God ; that it is delusive and ruinous to those who hold it ; and that its effects and influence are every way injurious to the morals and happiness of society in general. A few remarks may be permitted in conclusion.

1. Popery is always the same. Whatever it has been, that it now is, and must continue to be. Whatever it has done it is ready to do again. Circumstances may have restrained it, but its nature is not changed—cannot change. The moment that it admits improvement, it gives up infallibility, and opens the door to private judgment ; it ceases to be Popery.

2. The question between Popery and Protestantism is not a dispute about trifles. Vital truth is at stake, a question of no less moment than, Who is the Saviour? What must I do to be saved?

3. Popery is crafty and insidious. It does not unfold itself at once. Especially, in its efforts to proselyte, it keeps out of sight what is likely to alarm, offend, or disgust. It stops at no means to accomplish its purpose. These time-serving artifices are not the tricks of an individual, but the allowed and approved means employed by the system; as truly as it is a part of the system of angling, dexterously to bait the line and conceal the hook. Therefore let not Protestants be lulled in security, or assuredly while they sleep the enemy will sow tares.

4. Something in religion that is not profess-
edly Popery, is very near akin, and has often led to it. We should be on our guard against the first approaches to so dangerous a system. The specious writings and superstitious observances of Tractarianism have paved the way to Rome, and conducted many there who at the first did not suspect where they were going. "Cease, my son," said the wise and inspired king, "cease to hear the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge."*

5. As Popery cannot change its doctrines, so neither can it abandon its claims. There are two which especially affect us in connexion with what is called papal aggression; one is its claim of universal authority, the other its claim to temporal

* Prov. xix. 27.

power. Romanists are not held back by any feelings of Christian honour or courtesy from proselyting Christians of other denominations. None are secure from their attacks, because they consider them, properly speaking, all their own property. The pope formerly elevated, sanctioned, or deposed princes at his pleasure, and, when he thought fit, directed their subjects to rebel against them.* That wily writer Dr. Milner says that, "Since Christendom has been disturbed by a variety of religions, this power of the pontiff has been *generally* withdrawn."† But it never was *fully* withdrawn, and never disclaimed by the pope. Nor have we any security from that quarter against its being acted on again. Let us not be blinded to facts.

6. The papal aggression is a matter of concern to all. No person should be indifferent to it.

Let not the churchman deceive himself by thinking, "After all Rome is a true church, and has given us many good prayers and sound creeds; there would be no great harm in recognising, or even coalescing with it." Some have said this, and quietly stood by while Popery drove in the narrow end of the wedge. We know what followed. Coalition will not satisfy Rome. If she can get it, she will not rest contented with any thing less than ascendancy, supremacy, universality.

Let not Dissenters say, We have nothing to do with the matter. If Popery should once more gain

* This power was assumed, and practically exerted, in the cases of king John, Henry VIII., and queen Elizabeth of England.

† Milner, End of Controversy, Letter xlv. p. 131.

its seat in England, religious liberty would vanish. *All* have a vast interest at stake.

If attention and feeling are awake, excitement should not be suffered to evaporate in mere bluster, but should lead to well-directed exertion. One important means of resisting papal aggression, is to extend the blessing of instruction, to diffuse knowledge among the working classes. Ignorance is the element of Romanism, and the mind that is without knowledge is the ready prey of error and superstition. Above all, active and extensive efforts should be made to instruct and evangelize the people, by circulating among them the pure word of truth, by evangelical tracts, and by the agency of enlightened and spiritually minded men, as Scripture readers, district visitors, and town, city, and home missionaries. This for the sake of defending our own people.

7. What can we do for the Papists themselves? Pity them; they have not had our privileges. Bear with their scorn and insults; which are the fault of the system rather than of the men. Never resent it. Show kindness in every way. Let there be no kind of persecution. Let Papists be compelled to learn that the religion of Protestants is a religion of benevolence and love; this may wear down prejudice. While trying to enlighten them, avoid angry controversy; a few words of pure Scripture, accompanying a kind action, is much more likely to be effectual. The prayer of faith should accompany all our efforts, which can only be availing as they are blessed by God. Their minds are blinded, the veil is upon their

hearts. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away.*

8. A special duty devolves on parents and heads of families at the present time. Children should be taught to think, read, reflect, reason, and judge for themselves of things around them; they should be made acquainted with history, especially those parts which show them what Popery is, and the noble stand that our ancestors made against it. They should be taught the principles of religion, not merely by repeating catechisms, but by being taught to search the Scriptures for themselves, and bring every thing to that test. Great circumspection is necessary as to the character and principles of servants having access to children, the schools in which they are taught, the books they read, the companions with whom they associate, the worship in which they join.

9. Let us more than ever value the Bible—the simple, sufficient, and only rule of faith and duty. Rome departed from the faith when she let go the sole and exclusive authority of Christ in matters of faith, and took for her rule the traditions and authority of men. The Bible is the sword of the Spirit, by which alone we can defend ourselves against the assaults of error, and by which we may successfully attack the errors of others. “In the use of this weapon lies our strength. It is that which God has appointed for his work, nor have we need to fear its power. It has always been the dread and terror of Rome. It was by gradually

* 2 Cor. iii. 14—16.

withdrawing it from general use that she succeeded in palming upon Christendom her blasphemous assumptions; it was by the reproduction of it to the world that the Reformers struck so heavy a blow at her dominion." Be this, therefore, our armour, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Let us cultivate acquaintance with it, study it, treasure it up in our minds and hearts, hold fast to it, not attempting to improve upon it, but witnessing to its simplicity and efficacy; and be willing to give up every thing that is opposed to it. Take it as the test of truth, and the test of religious teachers. "Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."* How did the apostles teach? "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."† "Not for filthy lucre's sake, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but as being ensamples to the flock."‡

10. All evangelical Christians should unite in making common cause against a common enemy. Let all aim at greater spirituality, simplicity, and conformity to the Bible. The nearer we all get to that, the nearer we shall get to each other. While we stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made us free,§ let us endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;|| and

* 1 John iv. 1.

† 2 Cor. iv. 2, 5.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

§ Gal. v. 1.

|| Eph. iv. 3.

earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.* Not for the shibboleth of a party, but for (the Reformers' watchword) "The Lord our righteousness"—salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. Union is strength; and if all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity join hand and heart in his cause, they may go forth in his name conquering and to conquer.

Let none of us forget the importance of personal religion. It is not enough to abjure or avoid Popery, unless we receive Christ. Oh for more earnest, deep-rooted, growing, consistent piety! Piety must begin in a deep sense of sin. Without this we cannot heartily receive Christ as presented in the gospel; and if we are only Christians in name, there is great danger of our being led away, to build for salvation on something that is not Christ—a refuge of lies, that the overflowing torrent will sweep away. But, if resting on Christ, no storm can shake us from that Rock.

May God in mercy spare our country! May he give wisdom to our rulers, and to all classes of society. "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us; that his way may be known on earth, his saving health to all nations."

* Jude 3.

Erratum—Page 1, line 2, *dele* have.

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